



APAC Women's Cancer Coalition – Philippine In-country Program
Addressing the Gaps to Cervical Cancer Elimination in the Philippines

17 May 2024 (Friday), 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM,
Aloe Rooms A and B, Marco Polo Ortigas,
Meralco Ave. cor. Sapphire St., Ortigas Center, Pasig City and virtually through Zoom

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Roundtable Agenda

1. Opening Remarks by Hon. Glenn Mathew Baggao, Undersecretary for Public Health Services, Department of Health
2. Keynote Address by Senator Joseph Victor “JV” Ejercito, Vice-Chairperson of Senate Committee on Health and Demography
3. Presentation on Jhpiego’s Centralized Laboratory Model for HPV Screening Project by Dr. Ingrid Magnata, Country Program Manager, Jhpiego Philippines
4. Presentation on the Impacts of the National Strategy for the Elimination of Cervical Cancer in Australia by Dr. Deborah Bateson, Professor of Practice and Co-lead of Cervical Cancer and HPV Stream, The Daffodil Center
5. Panel Discussion 1 on the Need for a National Elimination Plan for Cervical Cancer
6. Panel Discussion 2 on Improving Financing Strategies for Cervical Cancer Programs in the Philippines
7. Closing Remarks by Ms. Carmen Auste, Senior Vice President, Cancer Coalition Philippines

Opening Remarks

Usec. Glenn Mathew Baggao, Undersecretary for Public Health Services, Department of Health

- Cervical cancer is the third leading cause of cancer deaths among Filipino women, with 4,380 deaths in 2022. Approximately 37.8 million Filipino women are at risk of cervical cancer, with an estimated 11 deaths per day.
- Usec. Baggao highlighted the WHO’s 90-70-90 goals for cervical cancer elimination by 2030, and cited the DOH’s ongoing efforts to improve vaccination, screening, and treatment.
- Investments in training healthcare professionals and equipping health facilities must be increased to effectively scale up screening programs.

Keynote Address

Sen. JV Ejercito, Vice-Chairperson of Senate Committee on Health and Demography

- Sen. JV Ejercito emphasized cervical cancer as a major public health challenge requiring collective efforts towards elimination.
- He noted that while effective prevention through HPV vaccination and early screening/treatment are available, many women continue suffering due to implementation gaps.
- Sen. Ejercito cited his legislative efforts like the Universal Health Care Act and the National Integrated Cancer Control Act to ensure affordable access to quality services.

- He advocated aligning national efforts with global strategies like the WHO's recommendations, adapted to the local context, reiterating commitment to bridge gaps through productive discussions.

Centralized Laboratory Model for HPV Screening Project

Dr. Ingrid Magnata, Country Program Manager, Jhpiego Philippines

- The Philippines has the modalities to eliminate cervical cancer by 2064 and abide by WHO's 90-70-90 global strategy.
- A centralized private laboratory is connected to health facilities in Muntinlupa City, Taguig City, Navotas City, Quezon City and City of Manila. Screening sites are in each city, while samples are collected at the barangay level.
- Results of the CLAMS Project reveal 98% acceptance to self-collection and 94% treatment rate for returning patients. However, only 43% of patients return after screening.
- Key opportunities learned from the results of the program include promoting self-screening, digitalizing service delivery pathways, and increasing capacity building for healthcare providers and community volunteers.

Impacts of the National Strategy for the Elimination of Cervical Cancer in Australia

Dr. Deborah Bateson, Professor of Practice and Co-lead of Cervical Cancer and HPV Stream, The Daffodil Center

- Australia has employed multiple cervical cancer elimination (CCE) strategies such as the National HPV Vaccine Program, National Cervical Cancer Screening Program, and National Cervical Cancer Register.
- Australia has made significant CCE progress. They have recorded 6.4 cases for every 100,000 women in 2019, which is approaching their goal of less than 4 cases for every 100,00 women.
- The Expert Advisory Group for the Elimination Response (EAGER) was established to address equity gaps in CCE. This is composed of stakeholders from the government, clinical bodies, vaccine experts and various communities to ensure inclusivity.
- Australia is starting to share its knowledge and findings with other regions through the Elimination Partnership in the Indo-Pacific for Cervical Cancer (EPICCC).

Panel Discussion 1: The Need for a National Elimination Plan for Cervical Cancer

- Dr. Jan Llevado, Chief of the Cancer Control Division, highlighted the National Integrated Cancer Control Council Strategic Framework, focusing on cancer prevention through early screening and detection. The DOH is collaborating with Jhpiego on costing initiatives for cervical cancer elimination, specifically on vaccination and screening initiatives. Effective demand generation and social mobilization are crucial to improve acceptance rates for cervical cancer interventions.
- Dr. Ingrid Magnata emphasized the importance of public awareness, demand generation, and patient navigation, citing peer influence and community involvement as effective strategies. The CLAMS project's centralized laboratory model was noted as a scalable strategy, with a referral mechanism between central labs and primary health facilities. Financial sustainability and local ownership were noted as essential for the long-term success of cervical cancer initiatives.
- Mr. Marco Valencia Sanchez, President of the Healthcare Technology Association of the Philippines and Country Manager of Roche Diagnostics Philippines, discussed the role of cervical health

education for both the public and healthcare professionals, suggesting that the private sector can provide support by utilizing their experiences and learnings from assisting similar initiatives in other countries.

- Dr. Karen See, Quezon City Cancer Program Manager and District II Health Officer, shared challenges in providing timely cervical cancer diagnostics and emphasized the importance of clear patient referral pathways and the potential benefits of digitalization.
- Dr. Deborah Bateson stressed the risk of fragmentation in national action plans and the need for a centralized communication strategy, civil society involvement, and an effective cancer patient registry.

Panel Discussion 2: Improving Financing Strategies for Cervical Cancer Programs in the Philippines

- Mr. Renato Limsiaco Jr., Senior Vice President of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), stated that the health insurer aims to reduce out-of-pocket (OOP) health spending to 28.1% by 2028 from 44.7% in 2022, and to increase PhilHealth's share of the total health expenditure to 27% from 13.6%. Covering primary and outpatient care is crucial to reduce OOP expenses. PhilHealth Konsulta includes diagnostic tests and treatment packages for cervical cancer, with a 30% increase in benefit package amounts funded through the Universal Health Care Act.
- Dr. Maria Julieta Germar from the Health Technology Assessment Council (HTAC) emphasized the systematic evaluation of health technologies, including the HPV test. The HTA process involves topic nomination, prioritization, scoping, assessment, and stakeholder consultations, leading to recommendations approved by the Secretary of Health. Dr. Germar expressed optimism about the progress that has already been made, noting the establishment of dedicated government institutions and the importance of collaboration among these entities to address challenges effectively.
- Hon. Wilford Will Wong, Undersecretary at the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), highlighted significant funding contributions, increasing the Cancer Assistance Fund from PHP 500 million in 2023 to PHP 1.2 billion in 2024. The budget process aligns with the Philippine Development Plan, emphasizing UHC implementation and healthcare capacity enhancement. Usec. Wong supported the advocacy for better healthcare funding and stakeholder engagement.

Closing Remarks

Ms. Carmen Auste, Senior Vice President, Cancer Coalition Philippines

- Ms. Auste emphasized six aspects for accelerating cervical cancer elimination: information, integration, inspiration, institutionalization, innovation, and involvement.
- She encouraged developing recognition programs, continuous multi-stakeholder discussions, and policy/technological innovations.