
Manila Women's Forum

A Network of Women Professionals

May 2005

Shedding Light on Breast Cancer in the Philippines

By Heather Crawford

At the recent Manila Women's Forum meeting at Tricia Hoban's house on April 18th, Dr. Diana Cua gave an informative presentation on breast cancer in the Philippines. Dr. Cua is a breast surgeon working out of Makati Medical Center and Medical Plaza. She trained in general surgery in Manila and later went to Stanford for 1½ years specifically for

breast surgery training. In addition to her work as a surgeon, she has been an active advocate for breast cancer awareness and early detection, fund-raising, and support groups.

Dr. Cua began by explaining that in the Philippines, most cases of breast cancer – approximately 99% – are treated with mastectomy. In North America, the reverse is true: about 80% of breast cancers are removed by lumpectomy. Cua believes that most prominent surgeons in the Philippines were trained before lumpectomies became a common procedure, so mastectomy is their preferred surgical option. Furthermore, mastectomies are far cheaper as they don't require further treatment.

Apart from the high rate of mastectomies, breast cancer patients in the Philippines face other obstacles. Many women are simply unaware of the possibility of contracting breast cancer. Indigenous women are reluctant to seek treatment in the early stages due to fear of doctors and/or lack of funds. There is little money for government-funded research. Once the tumor is removed, some women resist further treatment for a variety of reasons. On a more optimistic note, now that chemotherapy is becoming more accessible and being offered as an out-patient procedure, women are becoming more likely to accept the treatment. Still, there is a long way to go in terms of health education.

According to new data from a 2005 report, more than 14,000 women in the Philippines will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year. An estimated 6,000 will die from the disease. These figures are up significantly from 1998,

during which 9,000 women were diagnosed and 3,000 died. Dr. Cua feels these estimates are low as only a few hospitals were included in the survey. The rise in numbers, though alarming at first glance, could also be explained by a more widespread awareness of breast cancer. Cua mentioned that a similar pattern of data emerged in the United States following a campaign to increase breast cancer awareness.

Breast cancer awareness is, of course, crucial. But what about women who were not able to catch the cancer in its early stages and are now struggling to cope? Ten years ago, there was virtually no support network for these women. That has changed, fortunately, and there are now over twenty breast cancer support groups in the Philippines. To help out with the financial side of things, Dr. Cua and others have enlisted the support of individuals and corporations. However, the money does not go very far as the drugs are costly; a 500,000 peso contribution from Rustan's, for example, will only provide drugs for about 30 patients. Of the drugs

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Breast cancer: Who's at risk?

Doctors can seldom explain why one woman gets breast cancer and another does not. But they do know that bumping, bruising, or touching the breast does *not* cause breast cancer. And breast cancer is not contagious; no one can "catch" this disease from another person.

However, research has shown that women are more likely to develop breast cancer if they have certain risk factors: age, personal history of breast cancer, family history, certain breast changes, genetic alterations, reproductive and menstrual history, race, radiation therapy to the chest, breast density, taking DES, being obese after menopause, physical inactivity, and alcoholic beverages. Source: NCI at www.cancer.gov

Next MWF Meeting

When: 6:30 p.m., Monday
May 16, 2005.

Speaker and venue: To be
announced by e-mail.

Bring: A contribution to the
potluck dinner.

June meeting: 6:30 p.m.,
Monday June 20, 2005



Voice of the Chair

By Lisa Kircher Lumbao

Great Story

*This is a wonderful story from a boy from the streets who with the help of Father Rocky from Tuloy Foundation graduated as valedictorian. Great to see what we can do when we give someone a chance. - Annette Helbig **

Message of gratitude delivered by MG22207 beneficiary and batch top-notch Sonny Lorenzo G. Baylen at Tuloy Foundation's 8th Commencement Exercises last April 1, 2005

Our distinguished guests of honor - the Honorable Mayor Jaime R. Fresnedi and Mr. Marciano C. Leo; our beloved, Fr. Rocky Evangelista, President and Founder of Tuloy Foundation, Inc.; Members of the Management Committee; Mrs. Medina Matriano, our Principal; Mr. Jose Perez, our Assistant Principal; our Heads of House; our dear Franciscan Sisters; our teachers; the

** Anette Helbig is the founder Springboard Foundation, a non-profit Filipino independent charity organization. Its mission is to raise funds for developing healthy, nurturing environments for children in the Philippines. Tuloy Foundation is one of Springboard Foundation's beneficiaries. Headed by Fr. Rocky Evangelista, Tuloy looks after more than 500 street-children in Alabang who attend school there and receive vocational training. 160 of them live in the compound. Tuloy provides a home, education and the hope of a good and decent life to hundreds more who have chosen the streets as their desperate recourse. Know more about Springboard and Tuloy Foundation at <http://www.springboard-foundation.org/beneficiaries.htm>*

staff and volunteers; our dear parents; relatives; schoolmates; friends; visitors; ladies and gentlemen... A pleasant good morning to all of you!

Today marks another milestone in Tuloy - 186 young men and women like me successfully graduated. As I happily stand and speak in front of you to represent this year's graduating class, my heart swells with pride. Though nervous, I still took the courage to share with you my feelings and my experiences as a proud Tuloy Kid. I am so delighted that you have come to witness and be part of our success. This day is an important stage in our lives. We now reap the fruits of our labors. Yes, it is true that education is a bitter seed to take, but its fruit is the sweetest.

Borne from a very poor family, I was sent to a public school to take my elementary education. Even when I was young, I have always been a diligent student. I woke up early in the morning and before the sun rose, I was already on my way to school. Everyday I walked 3 kilometers to get to school and another 3 to get home. At night, I patiently studied my lessons, with only a gas lamp as my companion, since we did not have any electricity. At times my father would tutor me and every time I gave the wrong answer, I received a strong punch in my stomach. I did not hate my father for doing this. In fact, I am very thankful because of him I was able to master the multiplication table and received an award when I was in Grade One.

When I reached grade Three my parents decided to take me to an orphanage so I could continue my studies. They could no longer afford to provide even my basic needs. I cried so hard asking myself why these had to happen. I continued my studies with the help of the Bethany House. When I was in Grade Six, I learned that my father was murdered. Being separated from my family was already hard, and losing my father was too much for me to bear. I was very sad, and I didn't know what to do. I wanted to take revenge for he was everything to me. I completed my elementary and dedicated it to my father because I wanted to show him that I can make it through. The diploma that I received was more his than mine. But he was gone. My first graduation was supposed to be the happiest time of my life, but I felt

different. During those lonely days, the Lord somehow enlightened my mind to accept the things that are difficult for me to understand.

Right after I graduated, I took the high school entrance examination at SOM Boystown to continue my studies. I failed. I thought it was the end of my world as a student for I knew that I was going to be sent home. The moment I feared most had arrived. I was called by the Superior of Bethany, but to my surprise, I was recommended to Tuloy. I can still clearly remember when I first set foot in Tuloy. It seems like only yesterday, when in fact, it was over 5 years ago when I was accepted as a resident of Tuloy. I was worried and nervous. I did not know what the future held for me. Despite the uncertainties, I was determined to start a new leash in life: To continue studying, complete a course so I can work and live a decent and productive life. I was determined and still am to fulfill this long-term goal. Over the years my fears slowly disappeared. With the unselfish love of Fr. Rocky, the Board of Trustees, the ManCom, the Community, the team of volunteers, the staff, friends, benefactors and partners of Tuloy, whose common desire is to save and improve the lives of children in distress and transform them to productive members of future generations, I began to see hope and the light to a brighter future.

Tuloy brought me closer to God and to Mama Mary, who I believed brought me here. Tuloy welcomed me into the world filled with prayers, respect for self and others, peace, joy and love. Tuloy instilled in my heart the value of patience, obedience, thrift, humility, discipline, kindness and service. Tuloy honed and enriched my talents, and equipped me with wisdom and skills for life. They healed the wounds of my past and lifted my self-esteem.

Tuloy taught me proper time management and to take care of the other aspects of my life: that there should be time for my personal hygiene, for doing household chores, community service, playing, studying, relaxing, eating, sleeping, and for prayer and worship. Here, I am not simply a by-stander but an integral part of the Tuloy Family. Here, I learned to associate with people and to treat everyone with

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Govt to shut firms with too few women

From correspondents in Oslo, Norway
Reuters / April 06, 2005

Norway will shut companies that refuse to recruit at least 40 per cent women to their boards by 2007 under an unprecedented equality drive, a cabinet minister said. "Companies have been dragging their feet. They really have to recruit more women," Children and Family Affairs Minister Laila Daavoey said. "In the very worst case, they will face closure."

Norway's parliament told firms in 2002 to ensure at least 40% of each sex in boardrooms by mid-2005 to force corporate leadership to match Nordic traditions of sex equality elsewhere in society.

Before today, however, Oslo had not spelt out sanctions for non-compliance. Many companies denounce the scheme as the toughest corporate sex equality goal in the world. "Since 2002 the percentage of women in boards has risen to only 11% from six," Ms Daavoey said. "Yet there are thousands of qualified women out there - companies can choose from half the adult population."

Many European nations have more women in boardrooms than Norway and the male bastion is a paradox for a country where 40% of the cabinet of Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik and 37% of parliamentarians are women.

Ms Daavoey, who oversees sex equality rules, said that all state-controlled firms including oil group Statoil and telecoms firm Telenor had already complied.

But many other firms are lagging, including energy and engineering group Aker Kvaerner or internet search group Fast. Many business leaders say the rules will force them to recruit ill-qualified women as quota fillers.

"If we can recruit women to our state companies why can't private businesses do it too?" Ms Daavoey said. She said the threat of closure was meant as a spur.

"I don't believe that companies will get into a situation where they risk closure. Companies will obviously find women," she said.

Contributed by Anne Sweetser and Ainslie Smith

The month of May, they say, was named after Maia, the Roman goddess of spring and growth. So here's to May — and to our eternal spring and continuous growth.



KaWoMeNaN

Selected and Edited
by Beulah Pedregosa Taguiwalo

In the merry month of May
When green leaves begin to spring,
Little lambs do skip like fairies
Birds do couple, build and sing.
— An old nursery rhyme

Beltane and the month of May

Beltane, writes Selena Fox, is also known as May Eve, May Day, and Walpurgis Night. It happens at the beginning of May, and it celebrates the height of Spring and the flowering of life. It's a time of "between time," writes Susanna Duffy, when the veils between the two worlds are at their thinnest and most fragile. The two worlds intersect at the crossroads of Beltane where they intermingle and unite and anything may happen. It's the time when the Faeries return from their winter respite, and people placed rowan branches at their windows and doors for protection from the otherworld. It's a time of divination and communion with Faery Folk and all Nature Spirits.

Workshops in May

These might be of interest to women living in the Philippines.

Back by popular demand! *Living Your Marriage Abroad – A Workshop For Expat Women*. Developing a strong marriage is challenging enough in our home countries. Taking it abroad has additional challenges. This day of information, discussion and planning is designed to help you feel empowered in your marriage. Concerned about confidentiality? Wondering if this workshop is for you? Contact Irene (0917-853-5351). Thursday 19 May, 9am to 2pm.

Introduction to Living in the Philippines by Daryl Newton. Living and working in a new culture can be a challenge. We can help make the transition smoother. Join our open seminar and learn how to fit in. Wednesday 25 May, 8:30am to 2:30pm.

Myths about Rape (continuation)

Myth: If a person goes to someone's room or house or goes to a bar, she assumes the risk of sexual assault. If something happens later, she can't claim that she was raped or sexually assaulted because she should have known not to go to those places.

Fact: This "assumption of risk" wrongfully places the responsibility of the offender's actions with the victim. Even if a person went voluntarily to someone's residence or room and consented to engage in some sexual activity, it does not serve as a blanket consent for all sexual activity. If a person is unsure about whether the other person is comfortable with an elevated level of sexual activity, the person should stop and ask. When someone says "No" or "Stop", that means STOP. Sexual activity forced upon another without consent is sexual assault. (To be continued)



Joanne de Leon / Isis International Manila

Illustration by Joanne de Leon / Isis International-Manila. E-mail feedback to communications@isiswomen.org

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currently available, Tamoxifen is the only viable option for the average Filipina. Two new drugs, Arimidex and Femara, are superior to Tamoxifen but are priced out of the range of most patients. Arimidex has fewer side effects than Tamoxifen and is 25% more effective, but only works for post-menopausal women; most breast cancer patients in the U.S. are now taking it rather than Tamoxifen. Femara is similar to Arimidex but is still very new.

What causes breast cancer? Cua says that hormone replacement therapy has been linked to breast cancer; when U.S. doctors became aware of this they stopped routinely prescribing hormone replacements to menopausal women. However, here in the Philippines they are still being prescribed. Other factors may include exposure to pesticides, soft plastics, and/or other toxins in our environment, and diet (most commercially available meat is loaded with hormones), but there is no conclusive research to date.

It certainly can't hurt to avoid products that have been linked to cancer. At the same time, focus on early detection. Examine yourself monthly and ensure that you have a mammogram yearly after the age of 40, or earlier if there is a history of breast cancer in your family. Spread the word – don't assume that all the women you know are aware of the importance of breast self-examinations and yearly mammograms. And finally, keep "abreast" of current medical findings, as new developments provide more options for treatment. □

(Great Story... From page 2)
respect. Here, I was taught to look after and to serve others.

My determination and disciplined life helped me complete a Vocational Course in Electrical and Electronics Technology. I am presently working for the Jardine Technical Services, assigned at the Monde-Nissin in Balibago, Sta. Rosa as part of their Maintenance team. I believe all these would not have been possible if not for Tuloy.

To Fr. Rocky and his team, to the friends, benefactors and partners of Tuloy...words are not enough to express how deeply grateful we are for all the things you have done for us. Without you, we might still be in the streets, exposed to negative elements; or perhaps in jail, for we would have become hardened criminals; or maybe six feet below the ground, as a consequence of our misguided lives. Through you we learned to appreciate and to enjoy our youth the Bosconian way. We felt the hands of Don Bosco and the loving graces of God.

To my co-graduates, the journey in the search of a better life is long. We are only half way through it. Not a single second of our time should be wasted. When it seems that everything else fails, we should never give up! Remember what we have learned in Tuloy. Remember the people who knew us not, yet loved us untiringly. Remember our parents. Above all, remember God. From them we shall draw strength to stand, to continue and realize that we are not alone in our journey.

As I come to an end, I am reminded of a statement I made when I stood before you two years ago. The true measure of success is not in what we hold or own. It is in the *person we have become!* Do we reflect the goodness and the compassion of the people who tirelessly share their lives with us through Tuloy? My challenge to all of us graduates: *Let us continue the help we received over the years by serving others.*

Thank you very much and good morning! □

The Manila Women's Forum

The Manila Women's Forum (MWF) is a cross-cultural network for women. It provides opportunities to build friendships, to talk to women of various cultures, and to share information about resources. Our meetings are intended to provide intellectual stimulation and lead to personal and professional development. All women are welcome to join. The current officers are **Lisa Lumbao**, Chair, Programs, Treasurer, and Newsletter. **Susan Nishihira**, Programs. **Beaulah P. Taguiwalo**, Newsletter, Website.

Cost of membership is P300 per year. Members receive a copy of the current mailing list in addition to the newsletter, which is also sent to non-members. A contribution is collected at each monthly meeting: P20 for members, and P40 for non-members. Please contact Lisa Lumbao at Tel. 812-3932, Tel/Fax 813-0168, or at lumbao@mozcom.com for more information about MWF.

Visit our website – a work in progress
www.geocities.com/manilawomensforum

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