

## Quezon City joins global fight against HPV

SCHOOL-BASED Immunization Program helps protect girls from the risk of cervical cancer

In its efforts to protect children and adolescents from vaccine-preventable diseases, the Quezon City government, the Department of Health and the Department of Education introduced the inclusion of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine in the School-Based Immunization (SBI) Program for all public elementary schools in QC, the largest city in the Philippines by population.

According to the World Health Organization, a person infected with HPV may be prone to cervical cancer, other HPV-related diseases include vaginal and vulvar cancer in women, and penile cancer in men. HPV infection may also cause genital warts and anal cancer.

In a report, the DOH said there are more than 7,000 new cases of cervical cancer every year, with close to 4,000 deaths occurring.

Quezon City is among active local government units that promote women's rights and welfare. Last March, QC Mayor Joy Belmonte rolled out a free breast and cervical cancer screening caravan as part of the International Women's Month celebration.

Quezon City's initiative to introduce the HPV vaccination in its health care services in schools is an important step in building a more resilient system that can fortify the community's protection against vaccine-preventable diseases.

This is in line with the DOH's thrust to promote the importance of "Kalasag ng Kalusugan" (Health Shield) by providing health care services for all communities and making vaccines readily available.

Through educational forums, the program urges parents and students to look beyond the concern of HPV as a stigma of sexual activity, and instead join in the fight to protect every Filipino woman from the burden of cervical cancer.



Demonstrating their multi-stakeholder commitment to promote the "Kalasag ng Kalusugan" are (from left) Quezon City district health officer Marizel Wong, DepEd Quezon City Schools Division superintendent Dr. Natividad Bayubay; Dr. Corazon Flores, DOH Regional Director and Metro Manila Health Department; and Dr. Sally Gatchalian, president of the Philippine Pediatric Society.