

# Quezon City joins fight against HPV

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



According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 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, DOH said that there are more than 7,000 new cases of cervical cancer every year. Out of this number, close to 4,000 deaths occur.

Quezon City is among active local government units that promote women's rights and welfare. It can be recalled that in 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 healthcare 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 healthcare 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.

**HPV VACCINE CAN HELP PROTECT GIRLS AGAINST CERVICAL CANCER LATER IN LIFE**

The "Back to BakUNA" SBI program is one of the multi-stakeholder initiatives that demonstrate the importance of getting early immunization especially for young women, before they are exposed to HPV.

HPV vaccine can help protect girls against the burden of cervical cancer later in life.

"The parents have to know that the vaccine is very safe. Before a vaccine becomes licensed, it undergoes a lot of clinical studies," Philippine Pediatric Society president Dr. Salvacion Gatchalian shared.

Betty Go Belmonte Elementary School principal Dr. Alice Masubay explains the importance of spreading proper information about the value of HPV vaccination.

“There are parents who are against the vaccination. We respect them, but we also told them that there is no scientific research which proves that vaccination is bad for the health,” Masubay said.

Meanwhile, to highlight their support for the initiative, Grade 4 learners of Betty Go Belmonte Elementary School gathered to form the shape of a cervical cancer ribbon which symbolically underscored the importance of creating awareness about the disease and aids prevention.

“As a student who will receive the HPV vaccine, I’m truly thankful for this program that aims to protect us from diseases like cervical cancer. Because as members of the youth who support health, it is our dream to grow up without the threat of HPV!” said Ashley Loraine Palomeras, Grade 4 student from Betty Go Belmonte Elementary School.

The SBI Program’s HPV vaccination is to be administered to female students aged nine to 14 years old. Prior to administering the vaccine, parents’ consent must first be obtained by school officials.