

• Vaccination in QC targets cervical cancer elimination

There is no doubt that sustainability is among the century's most popular buzzwords.

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As described by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, “a sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

It is also more than just about the environment. It is about the environmental health and social equity to create healthy and thriving communities.

With this in mind, a pioneering effort to put an end to the deadly cervical cancer, which kills 12 Filipino women every day, was launched in Quezon City, which is under the leadership of Mayor Joy Belmonte.

A vaccination roadshow, launched in the District 1 of the city last month was meant to combat the human papillomavirus (HPV) through a five-week initiative, which started July 9 and which runs every Tuesday until August 6.

It is the first of its kind among local governments in the Philippines and it aims to bring essential immunization services directly to the community through an innovative mobile roadshow format.

By making vaccines accessible to hundreds of young girls in Quezon City aged 9 to 14, the program supported by the Quezon City government, Quezon City Health Office and barangay captains of District 1, underscores the importance of preventive healthcare in reducing the incidence and impact of cervical cancer, according to a statement about the HPV vaccination roadshow.

Quezon City District 1 Councilor Charm Ferrer, who is a cervical cancer survivor herself, led the launching and underscored the importance of the fight against HPV.

“Now as a public official, it is my duty to ensure the health and wellbeing of my constituents. With this landmark initiative, we will ensure that all our adolescent girls in Quezon City will be vaccinated. We support Mayor Joy Belmonte’s vision of a road to zero cervical cancer in Quezon City,” Ferrer said during the launch.

“Cervical cancer can be prevented through vaccination and screening. By taking concerted action as one community against HPV, we can ultimately eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem,” she said in the statement.

A global and national concern

Cervical cancer, the statement also said, remains a significant health burden, particularly in Asia, where it accounts for 58 percent of global deaths from the disease.

In the Philippines alone, at least 12 women die daily from cervical cancer, making it the second most frequent cancer among women aged 15 to 44, industry data showed.

As experts said, however, cervical cancer is a type of cancer that is highly preventable.

The combination of HPV vaccination and cervical screening can provide the greatest protection against this disease.

For the vaccination roadshow, over 200 participants attended the kickoff event, including representatives from various community organizations, barangay and city health departments, civil society groups and the private sector.

“This is a significant milestone in our fight against cervical cancer. This is a moment of hope, empowerment and making a difference. We can create a future where cervical cancer is a thing of the past,” said Dr. Lani Buendia, Quezon City National Immunization Program Medical Coordinator.

The initiative, according to proponents, also supports the Department of Health’s fight against cervical cancer, which calls for a collective action to protect every Filipino woman by making healthcare services and vaccines accessible to all communities.

“During the launch, less than 100 adolescent girls were vaccinated against the virus and 31 female adults were screened for cervical cancer. The next legs of the HPV vaccination roadshow aims to vaccinate hundreds more of target school girls and continue to provide breast and cervical cancer screenings to adults,” the statement also said.

The World Health Organization has set ambitious global targets to eliminate cervical cancer. These include vaccinating 90 percent of girls with the HPV vaccine by age 15, screening 70 percent of women by ages 35 and 45, and ensuring 90 percent of women with pre-cancer or invasive cancer receive appropriate treatment.

For sure, a community without diseases is truly a sustainable one and is on its way to a sustainable future.