

- Vaccination

## QC launches vax roadshow to eliminate cervical cancer

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THE local government unit ( LGU) of Quezon City has launched a one- of- a- kind mobile vaccination campaign to put an end to the deadly human papillomavirus ( HPV) or simply called cervical cancer, which kills a dozen Filipino women every day.

Held in the first district of the biggest LGU in the metro, this pioneering effort is aimed at bringing vital immunization services directly to the community via a mobile roadshow.

This five- week initiative of the city government, which started last July 9, 2024 and runs every Tuesday until August 6, is supported by the **Quezon City Health Office** and all barangay captains of District 1.

By making vaccines accessible to hundreds of girls aged nine to 14 in Quezon City under- scores the importance of preventive healthcare in mitigating the incidence and impact of the HPV.

### Kick-off

THE kick- off event was led by no less than Quezon City District 1 **Councilor Charm Ferrer**, who is a cervical cancer survivor herself.

In her speech, Ferrer recalled the ordeal she underwent with six chemotherapies and 32 radiation therapies.

“Now as a public official, it is my duty to ensure the health and well- being 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 road to zero cervical cancer in Quezon City,” Councilor Ferrer said.

“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 added.

### Big burden

CERVICAL cancer is still a big health malady, particularly in Asia, where it accounts for 58 percent of global deaths from HPV.

In the Philippines alone, at least 12 women die daily from this disease, making it the second most prevalent cancer among women aged 15 to 44.

While it has an adverse effect on families and the entire community, given the financial and emotional burden it causes, this type of cancer that is highly preventable, thanks to the combination of HPV vaccination and cervical screening that can provide the greatest protection against this illness.

“We are fortunate to have this program for the youth to prevent cervical cancer. Had there been like this in the ‘ 80s or ‘ 90s, maybe there would only be a few women who succumbed to cervical cancer, one of them was my eldest sister,” said Council Woman Marissa Reyes, chairperson of Barangay Bahay Toro Health Committee.

## Successful launch

BY and large, the World Health Organization ( WHO) has set ambitious global targets to address cervical cancer. These include inoculating 90 percent of girls with the HPV vaccine by age 15, screening 70 percent of women by ages 35 and 45, and guaranteeing 90 percent of women with pre- cancer or invasive cancer receive the right treatment.

Reaching these ambitions need a multisectoral approach involving individuals, families, communities, civil society, and government agencies.

Heeding this call, Quezon City's HPV vaccination roadshow supports the Department of Health's fight against cervical cancer, which necessitates collective action to protect every Filipino woman by making healthcare services and vaccines available to all communities. This is apparent in the initial success of the program, where less than 100 adolescent girls were given a shot of HPV vaccine and 31 female adults were screened for cervical cancer.

## Community organizations

MORE than 200 participants attended the kick- off 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,” Dr. Lani Buendia, medical coordinator of Quezon City National Immunization Program.

The next legs of the HPV vaccination roadshow seeks to inoculate hundreds more of the target school girls and continue to provide breast and cervical cancer screenings to adults.