

ICanServe, Taguig City, Dashlabs, Novartis launch data-digital project to support breast cancer control program

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- The ICanServe Foundation, City of Taguig, local healthcare software startup Dashlabs, and Novartis have launched the Circle of Life Data and Digital Infrastructure project to support the Ating Dibdibin program.
- The Circle of Life project will generate analytics that can help identify gaps in cancer care and enhance monitoring and evaluation. This can empower the local government to make data-driven decisions and use the data to support their request for healthcare-related funding at the local and national levels.

The ICanServe Foundation, City of Taguig, local healthcare software startup Dashlabs, and Novartis have launched the Circle of Life Data and Digital Infrastructure project to support the Ating Dibdibin program. The Circle of Life project launch was held at the Residence of the Swiss Ambassador in Makati City.

“Innovation is a vital part of the Swiss DNA. This innovative, multi-stakeholder approach to healthcare using data analytics is a prime example of how collaboration between the public and private sector can improve lives and help build a stronger future, together,” said H.E. Alain Gaschen, Swiss Ambassador to the Philippines.

Launched in 2008, Ating Dibdibin is a community-based early breast cancer detection program that eventually expanded to a full-scale breast cancer control program in partner cities of breast cancer advocacy organization ICanServe Foundation. The program promotes early detection, early diagnosis, access to timely and quality care, supportive care, palliative care and patient navigation.

“We chose Taguig City as the pilot area because they do what it takes to save a life. They have continually evolved the Ating Dibdibin program so it remains responsive and relevant,” said Ms. Kara Magsanoc-Alikpala, Founding President of ICanServe Foundation and Vice President for Internal Affairs of Cancer Coalition Philippines.

The ICanServe Foundation’s Ating Dibdibin program is one of two entries from Filipino patient organizations that were adjudged the inaugural winners of the 2022 Alliance and Partnerships for Patient Innovation and Solutions (APPIS) Innovator Program. The APPIS Innovator Program supported the development and implementation of the Circle of Life project.

According to Ms. Alikpala, building the Ating Dibdibin data and digital infrastructure in Taguig City through the Circle of Life project will generate analytics that can help identify gaps in cancer care and enhance monitoring and evaluation. This can empower the local government to make data-driven decisions and use the data to support their request for healthcare-related funding at the local and national levels.

“I believe with good data we can eventually overcome every barrier to quality and timely care for breast cancer. Data and knowing how to interpret it can help us identify problems, including those challenges that have yet to surface, but will. Data can guide us to design targeted interventions and solutions. Nowadays, it’s a necessary investment in saving lives,” Ms. Alikpala explained.

“The APPIS Innovator Program supports patient organizations across Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa that have found innovative ways to elevate and amplify patient voices. It enables patient organizations to grow and scale existing patient programs and take these to the next level to improve health outcomes,” said Ms. Ruth Kuguru, Region Head, Patient Engagement & Communications, Innovative Medicines Novartis.

“The launch of the Circle of Life Data and Digital Infrastructure project is a great leap forward in breast cancer response and advancement of healthcare services in the city of Taguig and of our country. The City of Taguig sees the potential for more effectiveness and efficiency heralded by the Circle of Life. As another pioneering project, this will enhance what we already have at Ating Dibdibin. May we continue to integrate systems that would elevate our advocacy and push for quality healthcare that leaves no one else behind,” said Hon. Maria Laarni “Lani” Cayetano, Mayor, City of Taguig.

“Thanks to the milestones we achieved with Ating Dibdibin, we notice an increased concern against breast cancer, stronger fellowships and solidarity among advocates and patients, and greater ownership for the advocacy across Taguig. We are proud of how the program has evolved, and in so doing saving thousands of individuals, many of them mothers, breadwinners and community leaders. This new collaboration, the Circle of Life Data and Digital Infrastructure, is part of what I believe is a natural progression for Ating Dibdibin, what with the world embracing digitalization and data analytics in all facets of life,” said Dr. Cecile Montales, Executive Assistant for Health of the Taguig City Health Office and Board Member of the ICanServe Foundation.

“We face daunting challenges in the healthcare sector. But when we start working with patient groups, civil society organizations and local government units, definitely the problem becomes bite-sized and solvable, especially when there are strongly committed stakeholders. The DOH is very willing to sit down with the ICanServe team and perhaps codify what has been done in the Circle of Life pilot in Taguig City and offer it to other local government units that may be interested in implementing the project. We are committed to get the health system working and accelerate towards universal healthcare for the benefit of patients,” said Assistant Secretary Beverly Lorraine C. Ho, Director for Health Promotion and Communication Service, Department of Health (DOH).

“An integrated approach involving multistakeholder collaboration is key in cancer prevention and control. This is why the National Integrated Cancer Control Act which we strongly advocated for adopts a whole-of-society, whole-of-government approach,” said former Secretary of Health Dr. Paulyne Jean B. Rosell-Ubial.

“Our mission at Dashlabs.ai is to make healthcare accessible for Filipinos. We are amazed at the assistance that Taguig personnel provide to their citizens and the impact of the Circle of Life project in saving lives. We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to scaling this project up through technology. We hope that we can together uncover insights and improve the lives of Filipinos throughout the country.,” said Mr. Bryan Giger, CEO & Co-Founder, Dashlabs.

“Now we have the NICCA and the UHC Law, and our ardent prayer is to make the intent of these laws become a reality for cancer patients in the Philippines, not needing so much pressure from patient groups and cancer advocates for the government to implement these laws with urgency. Indeed, we need each other. We have to join forces together to escalate this fight against breast cancer. We need to act now and keep the Circle of Life ablaze, with each circle representing a generous contribution from each member of the Philippine community,” said Dr. Corazon Ngelangel, President, Philippine Cancer Society.

“The Circle of Life project is a significant step in addressing data gaps essential to improving quality of breast cancer support and enhancing responsiveness of patient navigation services. This innovative system will serve as a backbone of implementation of the National Integrated Cancer Control Act and localization in local

government units,” said Ms. Carmen Auste, CEO of Cancer Warriors Foundation and Vice President for External Affairs of Cancer Coalition Philippines.

“Going data and digital for our HC system will help lower healthcare costs. This enables efficient monitoring of patients for early detection and timely consult at the primary care level thereby reducing late diagnosis that requires specialist care and more advanced diagnostics and treatments. Disease education can also be more effective based on data and evidence from the system. Novartis aims to collaborate with stakeholders to help reduce the burden of noncommunicable diseases such as breast cancer,” said Ms. Christine Fajardo, Communications & Engagement Head, Philippines & Asia Aspiring, Innovative Medicines Novartis.



Partner stakeholders show their support for the Circle of Life Data and Digital Infrastructure project. Photo shows (from left to right) Ruth Kuguru, Region Head, Patient Engagement & Communications, Innovative Medicines Novartis; Kara Magsanoc-Alikpala, Founding President, ICanServe Foundation, and Vice President for Internal Affairs, Cancer Coalition Philippines; Bibeth Orteza, Spokesperson, ICanServe Foundation; Dr. Paulyn Jean B. Rosell-Ubial, Head, Biomolecular Laboratory, Red Cross, and Policy Adviser, ICanServe Foundation; H.E. Alain Gashen, Swiss Ambassador to the Philippines; Bryan Giger, CEO Dashlabs.ai; Hon. Maria Laarni Cayetano, Mayor of Taguig; Dr. Beverly Lorraine Ho, Assistant Secretary, Public Health Services Team, and Director Health Promotion Bureau; Dr. Corazon Ngelangel, Member, NICCA Council, and President, Philippine Cancer Society; and Dr. Cecile Montales, Executive Assistant for Health, Taguig City Health Office.



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