

# BATTLING FOR BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

**BY TET ANDOLONG**

**T**he Philippine Wacoal Corp. and the Philippine Foundation for Breast Care, Inc. (PFBCI) have recently introduced their partnership's logo in celebration of the Breast Cancer Awareness Month, which is held every October.

The "Keep Abreast" logo symbolizes the unending pursuit of PFBCI and Wacoal in providing substantial knowledge and insights about breast cancer to women.

The pink colored loop ribbon with the words "Keep Abreast" superimposed right in the middle embodies Wacoal commitment and support for the cause. It signifies the campaign for people to be aware and regarding breast cancer.

The pink ribbon is considered to be the international symbol in the fight against breast cancer, and most organizations all over the world use it in one form or in another. Each one maybe visually different and uniquely rendered but they all stand for and mean the same objective to promote breast cancer awareness and raise funds for

prevention, research and cure. Wacoal has been known through the years of understanding the needs of women. The company believes that wellness is an important aspect of being beautiful, and the Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign is significant move to help women in their quest for beauty.

During the launch, Suzette Andrews, a breast cancer survivor and publisher of the magazine Big C Conquering Cancer, shared her experiences and struggles. Andrews is a mother of three and is happily married to Paul Andrews, an industrial engineer and contractor. She was diagnosed with cancer in 2003 and 2005. However, with her determination and faith in God, she was able to surpass one of the hardest phases in her life.

"Despise of the adverse effects of cancer, you are your normal self and you will soon survive the disease. You must go on with your life and surround yourself with your positive thoughts and people. The doctor will still be your best source of information," Andrews emphasized. Another speaker was breast cancer survivor Perla Imperial, R.N.

realtor and businesswomen who loves to travel, meet people and reach out to others.

Imperial is a breast cancer survivor having been diagnosed with cancer in 2000. Since overcoming her ordeal, she has taken on an active role on cancer-related advocacy. In 2001 Imperial founded the Breast Cancer Support Group of the Breast Care Center of East Avenue Medical Center. She is the current president of the organization and treasurer of the Philippine Foundation for Breast Care, Inc. (PFBCI).

## **The myths and facts**

DURING the launch and seminar, Philippine Wacoal Corp. and PFBCI shared important love that woman should know about, which was lifted from a piece, entitled *Breast Cancer Myths and Facts, What you need to know*, written by S. Eva Singletary, M.D., and Alice F. Judkins, R.N., MS of the MD Anderson Cancer Center in 2001. The material provides 31 myths and facts, some of which are:

**Myth:** Underwire bras compact the lymphatic system of the breast and cause breast cancer.

**Fact:** "There is no scientifically valid studies that show a correlation between wearing bras of any type and the occurrence of breast cancer. The Singer and Grismaller's study was not conducted according to standard principles of epidemiological research and did not take into consideration other variables, including known risk factors for breast cancer," American Cancer Society, 1999:

**Myth:** A woman has little and no risk for breast cancer if she has no family history.

**Fact:** More than 75 percent women with breast cancer have no family history of the disease. Simply being female puts all women at risk.

**Myth:** Estrogen cause breast cancer.

**Fact:** No data has shown that estrogens in birth control and hormonal replacement pills for breast cancer. However, if breast stimulate its growth.

**Myth:** Breast Cancer does not occur in young women.

**Fact:** Breast Cancer is more common in women older than 50, but it can and does occur in women of all ages.

**Myth:** Women with large breasts have a greater risk of having breast cancer.

**Fact:** Size has no relation to risk. It is however, sometimes more difficult to examine large breasts because there is more tissue to mask a lump.

**Myth:** An injury to the breast can cause breast cancer.

**Fact:** Cancer is not cause by hurting or bruising the breast. However, when a cancer is already present, it is often detected when a woman touches her breast after an injury.

**Myth:** Mammography is painful and can harm the breast.

**Fact:** During mammography, the breasts is compressed. Although this can be uncomfortable, it is not harmful to the breast and is usually not painful. Scheduling the mammogram after the menstrual period, when the breast is less tender, will reduce the discomfort.

**Myth:** Breast cancer will always be painful.

**Fact:** Most early breast cancers do not hurt. However, some are associated with unusual sensations in the breast, including sourness and burning.

**Myth:** Most lumps in the breast are cancer.

**Fact:** Most breast lumps are not cancer. However, it is important to obtain a definite diagnosis instead of assuming that a lump is harmless.

**Fact:** Mammogram do not show 10 percent to 15 percent to all breast cancer patients. Every suspicious mass must be further investigated.

**Myth:** Removal of the entire breast is safer than segmental mastectomy and radiation therapy.

**Fact:** Survival is for patients who have breast conserving therapy and those who undergo total or modified radical mastectomy.

**Myth:** Women with a strong family history of breast cancer should not consider breast conserving therapy.

**Fact:** A strong family history of breast cancer is not a contraindication of breast conserving therapy.

The decision about which treatment to use should take into account several factors such as stage of breast cancer, body build and lifestyle.

**Myth:** Women should not have immediate breast reconstruction. It is best to wait a couple of years to make sure the cancer does not recur.

**Fact:** With proper surgical removal of the cancer on the breast, there is no reason to delay reconstruction in most patients. In fact, immediate reconstruction is often preferable since only one surgery is required and the cosmetic result can be better.

The next "Keep Abreast" Cancer Awareness Seminar is scheduled on October 14, 2 pm, at the Asian Institute of Management in Makati; and October 29, 9 am, at the Philippine Stock Exchange on Ortigas Avenue. Admission is free and open to the public. The event will also provide free breast check-ups for all the participants.

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