



National
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Amanita

Welcome Speech by the Mrs Deidre Sidhu, Organising Chairperson

The Inaugural Specialist Breast Cancer Nurse Education Course, Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, 24-28 April 2006

Yang Berbahagia Datin Azrene Abdullah,
Yang Berbahagia Datin Siti Noriah,
Yang Berbahagia Datuk Peter Wentworth, CEO BP,
Mr Morten Lundal, CEO DiGi,
Dr Saunthari Dharmalingam, Executive Director National Cancer Society of
Malaysia
Dr P. Sathyamoorthy, Immed Past President, College of Radiology
Dr Kanaheswari, Vice President, Breast Cancer Welfare Association
Professor Kate White, Edith Cowan University, Perth
Partners in Breast Health
Nurses
Friends and invited guests
Members of the PRESS/MEDIA

Thank you so much for joining us here today for the certificate presentation to 25 nurses who have completed the inaugural specialist breast cancer nurse education training course. It is the first of its kind in Malaysia and it is hoped our Malaysian nurses here today are now equipped with the education necessary to best support and manage our women who are facing breast cancer.

For 2 years I worked at the National Cancer Society of Malaysia and during that time I met many women diagnosed with breast cancer. I understood the issues they faced as I had had my own individual journey with cancer 5 years ago. I then embarked on several personal projects that included conducting workshops all over Malaysia to doctors, nurses and women with breast cancer. I soon realized the many problems that these women faced but I also realized the lack of resources and skills of the nurses that care for these women. I approached a breast care nurse I knew in Perth and asked her who could train these nurses and without hesitation she told me to go to Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia.

I did and I met Professor Kate White and she agreed that it would be viable to conduct a specialist nurse training course in Kuala Lumpur over a period of a week. So I came back to Kuala Lumpur and pursued my vision. I needed funds. Both BP Malaysia and DiGi agreed without hesitation to my proposal as fortunately they had both worked with me before and had funded other projects that support those diagnosed with cancer. Both these companies have such strong beliefs in their Corporate Social Responsibilities and I am still overwhelmed by their generosity and intense interest in ensuring the course was conducted at the highest level for the maximum benefit of the community. My vision became a reality



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and I embarked on organizing this course in partnership with others involved in breast health.

Breast cancer is a major health problem in Malaysia and the Number 1 cancer in women.

Several major problems face women with breast cancer in Malaysia, these include:

- ❖ late presentation
- ❖ women opting for traditional treatment
- ❖ Ignoring symptoms due to fear and cultural issues.
- ❖ psychosocial issues

There is now strong evidence that the breast nurse role can lead to improved psychological outcomes and continuity of care for women diagnosed with breast cancer. Research has shown that women cared for by a breast nurse had significantly improved psychological adjustment one year post surgery, and this adjustment occurs earlier in the recovery period, than those who are not cared for by specialist breast nurses.

The differences between care provided by specialist breast nurses and generalist nurses are likely to be linked to differences in training and role preparation. Equally important the breast nurse has been shown to increase both women's understanding of their diagnosis and treatment options, and knowledge of their disease.

I am thrilled at what we have achieved this week. I have watched a group of nurses learn with enthusiasm; gel together creating a special bond; sharing techniques that each use and more importantly realize how much this will help them in their different practices. Each one of my friends will leave today with a keenness to apply what they have learned; they have expressed determination to maintain contact with each other and to continue to learn and teach others in their workplace. Ladies I am so very proud of you all.

Where do we go from here? We have now established a network of breast care nurses. This is only the beginning. I will continue to facilitate this group and explore how we may provide continual further education and provide standardized care. Once we have evaluated this inaugural course with the help of Professor White and Jane Gregson, we will endeavor to continue to train specialist breast care nurses to ensure that women with breast cancer in Malaysia receive the highest level of care.

None of this would have been possible without the support of many people

My sincerest thanks must go to our principle sponsors, BP & DiGi. You have both been a pleasure to work with and I thank you for believing in me and my team. Funding is often the stumbling block and without BP & DiGi this would not have happened.



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Thank you to J & J for accommodating us for the week and feeding us very well. We couldn't have had a better venue. I am an Australian married to a Malaysian and this project has also been a marriage between Malaysian nurses and Australian expertise. I thank the Australian High Commissioner and the High Commission for their support.

My special thanks must go to Professor Kate White from Edith Cowan University and Jane Gregson, a practicing breast care nurse from Perth who have worked tirelessly this week to impart as much expertise as time would allow but who have also learnt much from our nurses. Thank you Kate and Jane and we hope you will return soon.

Thank you to Mr Tony Connell, one of Australia's leading plastic and reconstructive surgeons for teaching us that not all women need to face mastectomies. Thank you to Innomed for sponsoring him.

We are fortunate to have many Malaysian experts join us this week to contribute to the course.

Thank you Prof Looi, Dr Matin Mellor, Ms Harjit Kaur, and Joanne Bruce. I have spent months working with Dr Evelyn Ho, Consultant Radiologist. She has proved as always an inspiration. Thank you.

And last but not least may I thank Marie Auger, Annabel Mackenzie and Francis who have ensured that our week has run smoothly and without hitches.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen for your time.