



LIVING WELL WITH ARTHRITIS AND LUPUS: A CELEBRATION OF HOPE, HEALTH, AND HAPPINESS

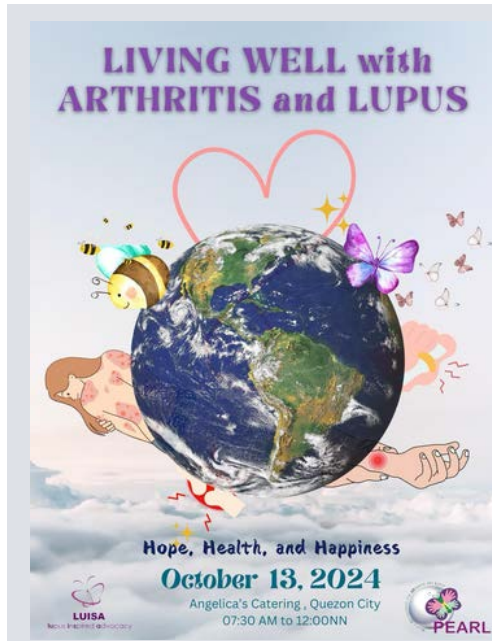


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BUZZ >

BEYOND THE PAIN

In celebration of the **World Arthritis Day**, beyond its educational focus, the **“Living Well with Arthritis and Lupus”** event held last October 13, 2024, was a deep dive into the human spirit which brought together patients, caregivers, healthcare professionals, and advocates for a day of shared learning. This unique gathering, organized by **Lupus Inspired Advocacy (LUISA)** and **People Empowerment for Arthritis and Lupus (PEARL)** in coordination with the **University of Santo Tomas Hospital (USTH)** and **St. Luke’s Medical Center (SLMC) Section of Rheumatology consultants and fellows**, served as a beacon of support, education, and empowerment for those affected by these chronic conditions and their families.



This gathering wasn’t just about sharing medical information or providing resources for those living with lupus and arthritis—it was a space where the power of shared experiences, stories of triumph, and the magic of community lifted hearts and spirits. It provided participants with an opportunity to connect, learn, and be inspired, proving that **even in the face of chronic illness, life can be vibrant and fulfilling.**

A simultaneous event participated by both adult and pediatric lupus and arthritis patients together with their parents kicked off with a registration and meet-and-greet, offering attendees a warm welcome. This set the tone for the day, creating a relaxed atmosphere for patients to bond over shared experiences.



The program officially began with a brief prayer, grounding the day's activities in a moment of reflection, followed by an opening remarks and introduction by Dr. Sandra V. Navarra. Adult patients, as well as parents of pediatric patients were clustered in different groups for a meaningful and organized sharing experience.

EMPHASIZING EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL WELLNESS



The first part of the workshop, delved into the psycho-emotional and physical aspects of managing lupus and arthritis. This 45-minute session, led by the rheumatology consultants and fellows, explored the intricate relationship between mental and physical health when dealing with chronic conditions where participants were encouraged to share about the physical and emotional changes they have encountered during their disease and how they were able to cope and adapt. From the **stories of pain and deformities of despair** that eventually **evolved to acceptance and strength** were shared among the participants, inspiring one another to bounce back better and stronger.

EMPOWERING PATIENTS THROUGH EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

One of the most impactful parts of the event was the Empowering Patients session. Various speakers introduced the participants to important programs aimed at advocacy and self-empowerment. For many, this session was eye-opening—it provided them with the tools and resources to actively manage their **health beyond medical appointments**. This session featured several key speakers:



From left to right: Dr. Jonathan Cosignado, Dr. Sandra Navarra, Mr. Paul Mendoza, Dr. Juan Javier Lichauco and Dr. Lisa Traboco

- Dr. Jonathan Cosignado spoke about patient empowerment as one of the important aspects of holistic care of patient with rheumatic diseases advocated not only here in the Philippines but is also being uplifted by Asia Pacific League of Associations for Rheumatology (APLAR).
- Dr. Sandra Navarra presented the Universal Lupus Patient Charter that needs to be recognized to advocate for the rights of lupus patients worldwide and could serve as a powerful tool in demanding better healthcare access and treatment options.
- Mr. Paul Mendoza delivered his PsorCOAH experience which offers coaching and inspiration to those with autoimmune diseases that they can also be a source of wisdom and hope for others struggling with the same condition.
- The Rheumatology Nurses Educational Module, introduced by Dr. Juan Javier Lichauco, highlighted the crucial role that specialized nursing care plays in improving patient outcomes.
- Dr. Lisa Traboco introduced her research on arthritis, encouraging patients participation on her study as this could bring significant impact on patients care.

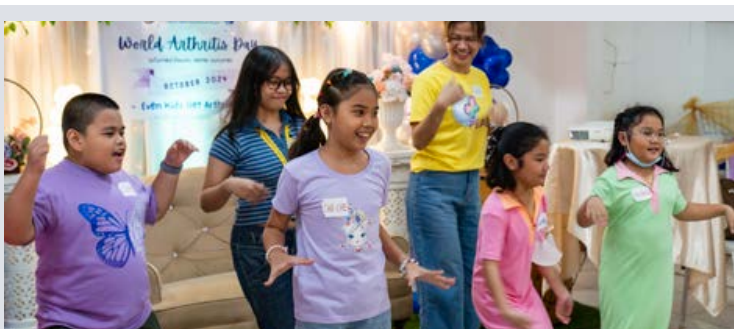
SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION



After the intense educational sessions, one of the most unique aspects of the “Living Well” event was its emphasis on wellness that goes beyond just physical health. Chronic conditions like arthritis and lupus affect all aspects of a person’s life—emotional, social, and spiritual. This session addressed these often-overlooked dimensions, focusing on the importance of a holistic approach to health.

Meanwhile, 13 brave children living with arthritis gathered and shared their struggles and experiences by participating with interactive games and arts and crafts session. They were provided with materials where they could freely draw, decorate or illustrate their personal encounter living with arthritis. What’s more heartwarming is hearing these little ones share their thoughts of their creative works giving us extraordinary insights from a child’s perspective. This is a reminder that even kids can get arthritis too and the importance of strong support system and care will give these children an opportunity to live a happy and meaningful life that they deserve just like everybody else.

INSPIRATION FOR THE FUTURE



The day wrapped up with some patients sharing their overall feedback, realizations and learnings on this great event. Some even shared their talents through music. Their words of wisdom and shared hidden talents weren’t just acts of experience and creativity; they embodied the resilience and courage of the participants, serving as a powerful reminder that **illness doesn’t define one’s ability to create, inspire, or shine.**



The most remarkable aspect of this event was how it **transformed** the often isolating experience of chronic illness into one of deep connection. Living with arthritis and lupus can be an isolating experience—flares can come unexpectedly, pain can make mobility difficult, and the unpredictability of symptoms can lead to social withdrawal. Yet, this event provided a platform for people to **break out of that isolation** and meet others who understood their daily struggles. These intimate conversations created a safe space for open dialogue, where attendees could learn not just from experts but from one another. Many expressed how crucial it was to hear others voice the same concerns they faced—confirming that they weren't alone in their journey. As one participant eloquently said as the event concluded, **“I came here feeling uncertain about my future, but I’m leaving with a sense of hope and a heart full of strength.”**