

BUTTERFLIES & BUMBLEBEES come alive at the LUISA-PEARL on-site & virtual Forum

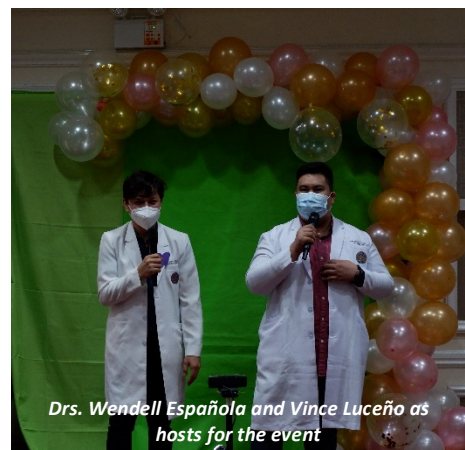
By Dr. Peter Paolo Daleon, UST Rheumatology fellow



The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has forced everyone to stay indoors most of the time for more than 2 years now. Because of this, the regular lay forum and meeting of People Empowerment for Arthritis and Lupus (PEARL) was stopped for the safety of the doctors and patients. Thankfully, with decreasing number of daily cases and easing up of community restrictions, a hybrid PEARL forum was planned. The objective of the activity was to see how the patients were doing amidst the pandemic and to celebrate the World Lupus Day which is usually celebrated every May 10. In addition, this allows rheumatology fellows to be up close and personal with patient partners – something we, fellows, have not yet experienced since the start of our training.

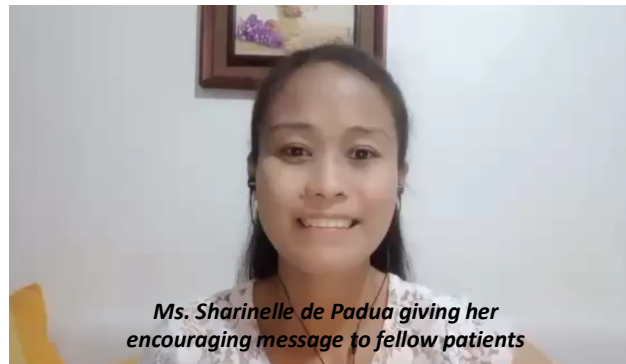
The event was held last May 8, 2022 at PengLai Chinese Restaurant at West Avenue, Quezon City. The event was attended personally by Dr. Sandra Navarra, the adult and pediatric rheumatology fellows, technical staff, and patient partners with their caregivers, while still maintaining strict health protocols to ensure everyone's safety. With the online participants gradually log-in via zoom, the event started at 9:30 am, and was hosted by Drs. Wendell Española and Vincent Luceño. Everyone was excited and happy to see each other again.

Starting off with explaining what the PEARL and the Luisa Inspired Advocacy (LUISA) were, everyone were reminded what their purposes are. This was followed by enlightening the participants why butterflies were associated with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) and bees to rheumatoid arthritis (RA). A



short video presentation on the previous activities of PEARL and LUISA through the years ensued, reminiscing how strong the bond between rheumatologists and their patients were as well as showcasing of rheumatologic patients' wonderful and varied talents.

Online testimonials of patients with SLE and RA, who had been with PEARL and LUISA for some time now, followed. Among them were Mr. Aerrol Retuya, Ms. Eloisa Aguinaldo, Ms. Zenaida Estrada, and Ms. Elyn Centeno. Ms. Sharinelle de Padua, president of Region 1 Lupus Support Group also shared an encouraging message to all, sharing how she became strong despite being afflicted with SLE and RA with its complications for 15 years. Truly, these messages of our dear patients resonated strongly with us doctors who take care of them, emphasizing the importance of good communication between the doctor and patient, as well as strong support from fellow patients.



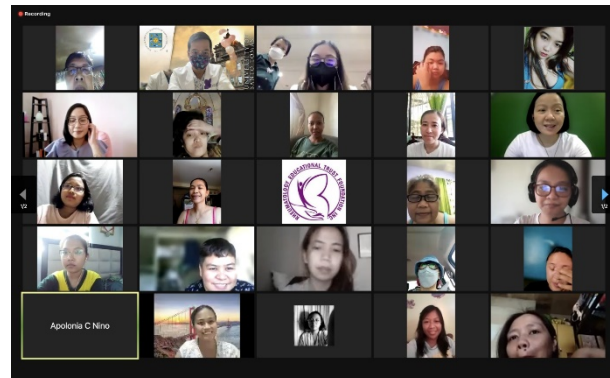
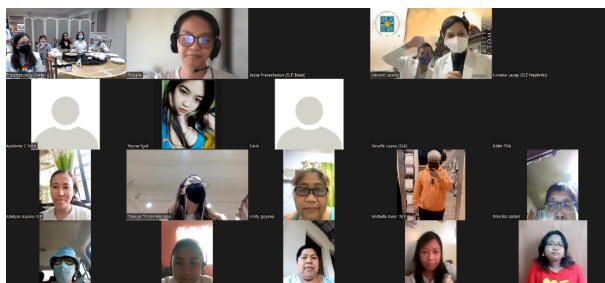
Then followed the “online kamustahan” where Drs. Española and Luceño engaged the online participants from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao in a lively “meet and greet”, excited to hear their experiences during the pandemic. This was followed by short video presentations of the different support groups. Entries from the St. Luke’s Medical Center Arthritis Club, Panay Lupus Support Group, and Lupus Foundation of Southern Mindanao showcased talents, tribulations and triumphs and overall resilience through the years and especially during the pandemic. It was heartwarming to watch the various talents of patients - proving that nothing can stop them from achieving being, becoming and staying HAPPY!

Much awaited were special intermission numbers from 2 onsite participants: Jaws dropped in awe when Ms. Marjorie Inumerable performed a wonderful rendition of “Easy on Me” with her exceptional voice. Timeless and memorable was the performance of Ms. Zenaida Estrada, who despite her deformities, executed her iconic rap without difficulty.



Marjorie Inumerable and Zenaida Estrada showcasing their talents

The event climaxed with community singing of Precious Gem, an iconic song dedicated for patients with autoimmune disease, and a picture taking including the online participants to document the first hybrid event of PEARL and LUISA. This was followed by a superb lunch enjoyed by all onsite participants, with the fellows getting up and personal with the patient partners for the first time. Despite all the technical difficulties of setting up a hybrid arrangement for the event, sound system and zoom output, the event was nevertheless successful. Truly these wonderful blended online and onsite have become the new norm, and we all look forward to the next one!



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