



**WOMEN LEADERS  
IN PAEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY  
NETWORK**



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PAEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY**

**ALMANAC 2024**

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**Contact SIOP:**

[programs@siop-online.org](mailto:programs@siop-online.org)

[membership@siop-online.org](mailto:membership@siop-online.org)

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# FOREWORD

**Dear SIOP Members, Partners, and Friends,**

We are delighted to present to you our second Almanac. Just as before, we bring you profiles of exceptional women leaders. Through these profiles, we aim not only to celebrate their invaluable contributions to the field of Paediatric Oncology but also to honour their unwavering dedication.

These exceptional women have been nominated by their colleagues, recognized for their outstanding leadership within our specialty. Their influence spans across various professions and roles, reflecting the rich diversity of women in our field.

Each profile provides a glimpse into the background, accomplishments, and profound impact of these remarkable leaders. By delving into their stories, you will gain unique insights into the perspectives and approaches that women bring to the realm of Paediatric Oncology. Rather than dwelling on barriers, their focus centres on effective strategies for advancing women in leadership positions.

Despite countless obstacles, our women leaders in Paediatric Oncology have shattered the metaphorical 'glass ceilings.' Their ground-breaking work has significantly advanced our understanding of childhood cancer, treatments and care.

We offer this Almanac as a source of inspiration and motivation for both current and aspiring female leaders. Let it ignite the flames of inclusion, equity, and diversity within our field. And to all the young female colleagues considering a career in Paediatric Oncology, we encourage you to pursue your passion with unwavering determination.

Thank you for reading the Almanac, and please feel free to reach out to us with any questions or suggestions: [programs@siop-online.org](mailto:programs@siop-online.org).

Warm wishes,  
Steering Group of the **SIOP Women Leaders  
in Paediatric Oncology Network**

**Co-Chairs:** Faith Gibson (UK) and Sarah Cohen-Gogo (Canada)  
**Steering Group Members:** Monica Cypriano (Brazil),  
Amita Trehan (India), Adedayo Joseph (Nigeria),  
Eman Al-Shamsi (UAE), Giselle Saulnier-Sholler (USA),  
Arliette Sulikhanyan (USA), Liz Sniderman (Canada)



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# I n n e a y d

## ODILE SCHWEISGUTH

*France*

**1903 - 2002**

**Odile Schweisguth, a leading French paediatric oncologist, was born on March 2, 1913, to a French army officer.** She was a fifth child and spent much of her childhood in Germany where her father was stationed during World War II. She never married but had 29 nieces and nephews.

She spent her entire career fighting for the welfare of her young patients. She is widely celebrated for her pioneering work in paediatric oncology and for her instrumental role in establishing this branch of medicine as a recognized discipline in its own right.

### Career and Accomplishments

Schweisguth began her studies in Nancy but later transferred and graduated from the University of Paris Medical School in 1939 when her father retired. Despite the challenging times during World War II, she was resilient and focused on her medical career.

She began her career as a young doctor at Hopital Enfants Malodes and later at the Gustave-Roussy Institute at the Villejuif Hospital where a paediatrician was needed to take care of children sick with cancer. This became the turning point of her career. Here, she discovered her passion for

**"Why do I**

**need**

**medals?"**

cancer research and her dedication to improving the prognosis of cancer-struck children. There, in 1951, she became a Chief in Paediatrics.

Most notably, Schweisguth established the paediatric oncology department at the Gustave-Roussy Institute in 1952, the only institution in France specializing in childhood cancer at the time. This was a significant moment in the history of paediatric oncology because it was one of the first such departments to be formed worldwide. By focusing specifically on paediatric cases, Schweisguth was able to implement specialized care and research strategies that catered to the unique needs of children with cancer.

Not content with revolutionizing cancer treatment in France, Schweisguth sought to improve paediatric oncology worldwide. Recognizing the need for international cooperation in cancer research and treatment, she co-founded the International Society of Paediatric Oncology (SIOP) in 1968. As its first President (1969 – 1971), she was instrumental in guiding its growth and establishing a global network of paediatric oncology professionals devoted to improving outcomes for children, adolescents and young adults with cancer.

Schweisguth was also credited with the development of the first classification system for childhood tumors, along with developing therapeutic protocols specific to paediatric cancers. She significantly advanced our understanding of the nature of childhood cancer and pioneered treatments that have since become standard in the field.

Moreover, she devoted her life to educating the next generation of doctors. She took it upon herself to provide formal training in paediatric oncology, laying the groundwork for the specialty as we know it today. Her mentoring and guidance have left a lasting legacy on countless doctors and researchers in the field.

She advocated for establishing relationships with

other health care professionals who had an interest in oncology, such as pediatric pathologists, radiologists, radiation therapists, surgeons, and nurses.

## Legacy and Impact

Odile Schweisguth's life and achievements serve as a beacon for paediatric oncologists and medical professionals worldwide. Her passion, dedication, and commitment to her field have not only saved countless lives but also laid the foundation for future advancements in paediatric oncology. Her legacy is a powerful reminder that through passion and perseverance, it is possible to create profound change in the world of medicine. Many women and men globally follow Odile Schweisguth in her footsteps seeking to care and cure children, adolescents and young adults affected by childhood cancer.

While Odile Schweisguth passed away on February 25, 2002, her contributions to paediatric oncology continue to live on. Her relentless efforts to understand and fight childhood cancer revolutionized the field, leading to significant improvements in survival rates and quality of life for affected children worldwide. As a testament to her immense contributions, SIOP established the Odile Schweisguth Prize in her honor in 1978 when Odile retired; the Prize is awarded annually to individuals who make significant advancements in paediatric oncology. After retirement, she continued to keep in touch with 500+ of her surviving patients, whom she considered a second family. Many remember her as “Tante Odile.” Following up with her patients was in Odile’s mind a commitment to continuity of care.

Very modest, she kept all her medical certificates displayed in her toilet at home; she angered French Prime Minister for refusing the Legion d’Honneur, the highest civil honor medal in France. ‘Why do I need medals?,’ she explained at the time (The Times, 2002).



# KATHY PRITCHARD-JONES

UNITED KINGDOM

Kathy Pritchard-Jones started university life reading Biochemistry but was able to change to Medicine after one year, thanks to the support of her tutor, Dr John Morris (St Hugh's College, Oxford). This was at a time when the majority of Oxford colleges did not accept women – something that is unthinkable now! After house jobs in the Welsh borders (Hereford) and Oxford, she trained in paediatrics in Oxford, Newcastle and Edinburgh, interspersed with a 6 month training fellowship in Adelaide, South Australia. She was an early recipient of a Medical Research Council 'recombinant DNA training fellowship', which allowed her to undertake a PhD in the molecular biology of Wilms tumour at the MRC Human Genetics Unit, Edinburgh. Thanks to a project grant from the Cancer Research Campaign (now Cancer Research UK), she established her post-doctoral research group at the Institute of Cancer Research and continued her clinical training under Professor Ross Pinkerton at the adjacent Royal Marsden Hospital, a specialist cancer hospital with a Children's unit located in the outer London suburbs (Sutton, Surrey). She spent 18 fulfilling years there, dividing her time between laboratory based, translational research mainly on Wilms tumour and rhabdomyosarcoma, and a very busy clinical role focused on solid tumours. In 2010, the opportunity arose to have a wider influence in designing cancer services for a newly formed entity, University

**"Always look on the**

**bright side of life!**

**Make the most of**

**what you've got"**

*Monty Python*

*theme song*

spent on completing their clinical specialist training. Lesson there was to be prepared that the panel members might have a different view of what makes for an optimal training pathway! Lesson two was to try again - thanks to a project grant from the Cancer Research Campaign (now Cancer Research UK), I was able to establish a small research group at the Institute of Cancer Research and continued my clinical training under Professor Ross Pinkerton at the adjacent Royal Marsden Hospital.

I faced a different type of challenge when I took on the clinical leadership role for reorganizing cancer services in North London. This involved engaging with hundreds of expert clinicians and multiple academic hospitals, many of whom were historical rivals. I needed to encourage these specialist services to aspire to being even better by working together in a different way. No one likes changes and I learnt to keep the focus on what outcomes and experience were being achieved for patients. Not an easy task when there was little comparable data at a local level. These changes then inspired the new specialist centres to collect better data and include measurement of what matters most to patients.

### **On Balancing Career and Other Life Responsibilities**

The collegiality of our multi-disciplinary profession and the teamwork that it takes to care for children with cancer helped me keep the stresses of my patients' lives in perspective. The very different pace of success in the clinic versus research lab and clinical trials was also helpful in keeping a balance - if things were at a low point in one sphere, there was usually something more positive going on in the other!

Family and friends and life outside of work are essential. When my two children were young, my husband was very supportive and worked close to home. As the kids grew up, they understood the importance of the field I worked in. Prioritising

family time is essential - those years when you can read books together, sit down to regular family meals and attend their school events only lasts a few years, so I made sure I did not miss too much. Making time to support younger people in their career choices and development is also very rewarding - whether it is your own children's peer group at school or university or trainees in your own professional life, both keep you in touch with current opportunities to be part of creating a more positive future.

### **My Words of Wisdom for the Next Generation of Female Leaders**

Looking back to when I was 25, I did not appreciate then the wide range of career opportunities that are open to those with a medical training. I have been very happy with my choice of paediatric oncology, but it is hard to do it full time throughout a whole career. Through having a research group, I naturally created a balance that was sustainable over decades. My advice to the younger generation is to identify a complementary line of interest and try it out - perhaps as part of your training rotation if this gives you the opportunity. If not, then look out for international workshops and 'global scholars' programmes, offered by several institutions. These will help you build your own network that will be a lifelong positive influence and source of peer support.

Take time to choose where you would like to focus your efforts and what success would look like. Take ownership of the things in your control. Don't waste time on trying to make things happen that are beyond your influence. Everyone can benefit from self-reflection and structured time to develop their leadership and communication skills. Find a relevant course and identify a mentor to help you develop yourself. If new opportunities arise that may stretch you beyond your comfort zone - you might enjoy a change in direction even later in your career, as I did.





# SIMONE ABIB

## BRAZIL

**Dr. Simone Abib is a pediatric oncology surgeon in São Paulo, Brazil.** She graduated from the Pontifícia Universidade Católica in São Paulo and then did her residency both in General and Pediatric Surgery at Escola Paulista de Medicina – Federal University of São Paulo, where she also did her Masters, Doctorate and Full-professorship. Her history with pediatric oncology surgery began when she was a General Surgery resident and cared for a very dear patient with Burkitt lymphoma who had an ileostomy. She is eternally grateful to him. At that time, there was not an organized structure to care for pediatric oncology in her University. There were only 2 beds at the pediatric ward and her career path was built in parallel with the growth and building of the Pediatric Oncology Institute – GRAACC – Federal University of São Paulo, where she is now the Head of Pediatric Surgical Oncology. Along with the multidisciplinary team, her patients have cure and survival rates near to those presented at high-income countries.

She first attended IPSO/SIOP Congress to present her Master thesis. She was invited to be the local organizer for IPSO when SIOP Annual Congress was in São Paulo and then she was elected a member of the IPSO Executive Council (EC), where she contributed as a member at large and Program Chair. After that, she had the great honor to be elected and serve as the first Latin

**Always keep your heart open, do your best and keep the intent of growing and learning. There is always something to learn and this is the greatest blessing.**

American IPSO President. In that position and with the support of other members of the EC and membership, we built the IPSO Guidelines that were published and used as basis to include Pediatric Surgical Oncology in diverse initiatives, such as in the WHO, ARIA, PrOFILe and made bridges with SIOP, St Jude Research Hospital, PROS, CCI and many surgical societies. We also agreed that every SIOP Continental Congresses should have an IPSO session within the program, and have been working to establish an international pediatric oncology surgery fellowship to raise the quality of surgery delivered to pediatric oncology patients everywhere.

Her other accomplishments include serving as the Past president of Criança Segura – Safe Kids Brazil (having accomplished 53% decrease of pediatric trauma deaths in 20 years in Brazil), Academic coordinator of Medical Course at Faculdade Santa Marcelina, Postgraduate and graduate mentor, Board member of GICS (Global Initiative for Children’s Surgery – member of Trauma and Oncology groups), responsible for Trauma Education for 20 years at the Federal University of São Paulo, responsible for trauma and oncology sessions in Brazilian Pediatric Surgery Society, founder of the Latin American Pediatric Surgical Oncology Collaborative Group (LAPSOCG), and many other international initiatives, such as collaborating with the Global Health Research Group on Children’s Non-Communicable Diseases Collaborative and St. Jude Global Program.

## On Relationships that Influenced My Career

The most important and meaningful influences are my parents, who taught me about love, perseverance, values, compassion and integrity. I thank all my teachers and masters for being my vehicles and partners so that I could offer my best to the world. In the Medicine path, I would like to recognize especially Dr. Diana Tannos, Dr. Sérgio Tomaz Schettini, Dr. Luiz Francisco Poli de

Figueiredo, Dr. João Aléssio Juliano Perfeito, Dr. Roseli Giudici, Dr. Dario Birolini, Dr. Antonio Sérgio Petrilli, Dr. Martin Eichelberger and Dr. Bhaskar Rao. They made me a doctor, a surgeon, and taught me a lot about leadership and service. I thank all my friends, inside and outside Medicine, for being part of my life, my patients and their parents who taught me a lot about what is essential in life. I thank all the people who crossed my path, those with whom I shared the same values and those who brought challenges because they are all my teachers and taught me a lot about myself at my best and at my worst.

Sometimes, I talk to my inner child and ask her: “Did you ever imagine these happenings and the unveiling of life in you and through you like that?” And together, we give thanks for the wonderful gifts and blessings received, offered and created through us, in service of the Greater Good.

## On Challenges and Overcoming Them

I learned that we cannot control everything and that despite the clinical outcome, there is always something to learn. Transforming pride and submission into humility, integrity and dignity makes me take ownership of my worth in the world, in order to contribute effectively to it, exactly as I am.

I learned the importance of internal leadership, giving and receiving, flexibility, the importance of positioning myself in my truth, knowing when to act and when to wait and observe. Those are essential to work in a multidisciplinary team for the patients’ good. I can trust that the Universe is good and beautiful and that there is nothing to fear within or without, no matter how much it may seem otherwise due to present distortions.

I learned to face and welcome my fears and pain with compassion, transforming what was monstrous into a speck that continues to be part of us and opening an immense and luminous window, full of

possibilities and solutions.

I have been lapidating my compassion, previously mixed with distorted feelings of being a “savior.” I have much more clarity about my role and can offer much more efficient and loving help, respecting the other's wishes, without getting involved in issues that are not mine, thus being truly supportive. Today, I have much more acceptance of life as it is, as well as of myself and others. My imperfection is perfect because it makes me grow. This makes us live and walk through the world in a much more free and loving way, with faith that everything is for our good and growth.

I am learning to let love flow inside me, so that it can flow outside and through me.

### **On Balancing Career and Other Life Responsibilities**

Family, friends, music, books, nature, meditation, believing in a greater and sacred purpose for everything.

### **My Words of Wisdom for the Next Generation of Female Leaders**

Do your best as it is now given the circumstances. Be aware of what life brings as signs and opportunities. You have choices to make and build your life as you wish.



# MARILYN HOCKENBERRY

## UNITED STATES

**Dr. Marilyn Hockenberry is the Director of Global HOPE Nursing and a tenured Professor of Pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine.** In her current role with Global HOPE, Dr. Hockenberry provides expertise from her clinical, education, and research experiences to develop the curriculum to teach others about how to care for children with oncology and hematology diseases in sub-Saharan Africa. Dr. Hockenberry is a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing.

In 2016, Dr. Hockenberry was inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau International Research Hall of Fame. This international award is given to nurse researchers who have achieved significant and sustained international recognition for their work that has impacted the profession and people it serves. Dr. Hockenberry is recognized for her research program that focuses on symptoms associated with childhood cancer treatment.

She has over 140 professional publications and received continuous research funding for 20 years. She is the senior editor for the Wong Pediatric Nursing textbooks used around the world. Dr. Hockenberry was among the first to specialize as a nurse practitioner in the care of children with cancer. She has spent most of her career practicing as a clinical nurse expert. She is a member of the SIOP Nursing Network Steering Committee and the SIOP Scientific Committee.

***"Fight for the things that you care about but do it in a way that will lead others to join you" Ruth Bader Ginsburg***

## On Relationships that Influenced My Career

As a young nurse practitioner, I worked with many individuals who had great influence on my career development. I was one of the first nurses to attend the pediatric oncology nurse practitioner program at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. The role was new and many physicians as well as nurses did not understand it. After completing my training, I had the distinction of working with Dr. David Poplack. Dr. Poplack is one of the physicians who believed in the pediatric oncology nurse practitioner role and had great faith in my own role as a young nurse leader. During my journey at Texas Children's Hospital, he supported the creation of an advanced practice role that truly reflected how important this position can be when caring for children with cancer and their families. At times his clarity in the advanced practice role far exceeded many of us who practiced in the role every day. His belief in me gave me great confidence and strength and to this day I am exceedingly grateful to him.

Dr. Ki Moore was my research mentor and colleague for many years. We worked together on several funded clinical studies evaluating the long-term effects of CNS-directed treatment including interventions to improve outcomes among children with acute lymphoblastic leukemia. Dr. Moore was an exceptional mentor in that she was more than a teacher; she was a colleague and trusted friend over the years. Her exceptional research expertise served as a nurse scientist role model for me. Her focus on research integrity and ethical principles guiding the conduct of research made a significant impression on me as a young researcher. I am thankful for the wonderful opportunity I had to learn from such an amazing nurse scientist.

## On Challenges and Overcoming Them

The pediatric oncology nurse practitioner role was new to childhood cancer centers when I began my career. I remember in my first position many questioned the advanced practice role and felt we were trying to practice as a physician. I had several encounters that I felt were unfair and unfounded. A few days into my first role as a nurse practitioner, a physician told me that he could never feel comfortable with a nurse performing medical procedures such as a bone marrow or lumbar puncture. How did I respond? I decided the best way to act was to show that I was competent and proficient with performing these procedures. In a few short months, this same physician started asking me to take over when he had trouble performing a procedure. Looking back, I feel the early years focused on demonstrating that I was competent in the advanced practice role, and I always felt I had to work harder at proving myself. This constant vigilance in being the best made me stronger.

My role as a nurse scientist produced many challenges. As a new PhD in a clinical setting, there was little time to pursue research. I realized to succeed as a researcher, grant funding must be obtained. Facing this challenge, I set out to find other nurse scientists to collaborate with on several research proposals. Partnerships with other nurse scientists resulted in many research grants being funded over the years. Realizing the importance of collaboration with other nurse scientists, we established a network of nurse scientists in pediatric oncology through the Children's Oncology Group Nursing Committee. This network made it easier to work together to promote nursing research in our specialty.

## On Balancing Career and Other Life Responsibilities

I cannot stress enough the importance of family and friends. I also realize the importance of learning how to separate my professional and personal life so they can remain in harmony. I

have found over the years that some things we experience as pediatric oncology nurses should not be shared with others who may not understand, especially our struggles with grief and loss of a child we cared for. It took some time to accept that my choice in becoming a pediatric oncology nurse was mine alone and I needed to find other ways to sustain my professional well-being. I realized I did not want my family and friends to experience the sadness I sometimes felt when caring for children with cancer. This resulted in a clear balance of my professional and personal life.

## My Words of Wisdom for the Next Generation of Female Leaders

Follow your heart and do not be discouraged along the way. Many individuals in your life will be well meaning but can distract you on what you want to become in your professional life. If you focus on what really matters in your professional life, then you will not be discouraged or disappointed. Dream big and stay the course. As you become seasoned in your career you will realize that the struggles faced along the way are all worth it. There will be times when you feel you do not have the strength to support the children and families you care for. Look inside yourself to find that inner strength; it will carry you through the darkest of times and the brightest days as well. Never forget to take time to acknowledge all the good you do as a pediatric oncology nurse.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg said “Fight for the things that you care about but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.” This rings true for those who have spent their careers in the pediatric oncology specialty. I realize the approach taken to every difficult encounter greatly influences the outcome.



# RAELENE ENDERSBY

## AUSTRALIA

**Associate Professor Raelene Endersby is a cancer scientist with extensive expertise in translational cancer research for paediatric brain cancers.** Dr. Endersby completed a Bachelor of Science with first-class Honours in Molecular Genetics from Curtin University (Australia). Inspired to make a difference in medical research, she completed a PhD at the Perkins Institute for Medical Research (Australia), focused on the leukaemia. Dr. Endersby then traveled overseas to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, USA, for postdoctoral training in childhood brain cancers and developmental neurobiology. In 2011, she was awarded a research fellowship to return to Australia and join the Telethon Kids Institute with a strong desire to build a research program in Western Australia that will accelerate international progress for children with brain cancer. The Brain Tumour Research Program at Telethon Kids Institute is a large collaborative unit she co-leads with Clinical Head Nick Gottardo. They have created an environment that is highly integrated, bringing together the clinical and laboratory aspects of brain cancer research, and that incorporates researchers from other organisations and disciplines where people generously share their expertise.

Internationally, she is Co-Chair of the Preclinical Steering Committee within the Collaborative Network for Neuro-Oncology Clinical Trials (CONNECT) which

**"Research is  
formalized curiosity.  
It is poking and  
prying with a  
purpose."**

**by Zora Neale  
Hurston**

spans North America, Europe, and Australia. She is a member of the CNS Tumours Group of the Australian and New Zealand Children's Haematology & Oncology Group (ANZCHOG) – Australia/NZ's peak cooperative trials group for childhood cancer. Her national recognition is evidenced by positions on committees such as Chairing the 2023 Commonwealth Government's evaluation of the Australian Brain Cancer Mission (ABCM), the Brain Tumour Expert Group of the ZERO Childhood Cancer Program (Australia's largest childhood cancer personalised medicine program) and the ZERO Preclinical Research Strategy Working Group, working to enhance fundamental and translational childhood cancer research in Australia.

## On Relationships that Influenced My Career

There are many people who have shared experiences, advice, and played important roles in shaping my career and helping me find my own path forward. Initially, it would have to be my parents who instilled a strong work ethic in both my sister and I. Through this I have learnt to rely on self-discipline, as well as to work with focus and attention to detail. My father was a GP and my mum a scientist (molecular microbiology), so they imparted an interest in medicine, encouraged me to explore my desire to understand the world around me, and inspired me to always think about helping others.

One of the character traits I have valued in my journey to be a successful scientist is integrity. This was instilled in me by my postdoc mentor, Suzanne Baker. She once said to me that as scientists, we do not have much to offer except for the ability to use our tools and knowledge to help us really understand biology; so, if we are going to pursue this, then it is on all of us to do it properly to the best of our ability. i.e. no short cuts, and do the right experiment, even if it is hard. Learning from her, I hold myself to very high standards of

excellence, being very careful in the designing of experiments, and in the interpretation of the results, considering all angles. Most importantly, I seek advice from others constantly to make sure all aspects are considered and addressed. Integrity not only relates to the way I approach my research, but I also in the way I interact with people. I am committed to authentic leadership. I am honest but kind and proud of the excellent relationships I have with my colleagues and students. I mentor my trainees to become innovative and critical thinkers, willing to be bold in their ambitions, whilst maintaining scientific rigor and integrity.

Most importantly, I believe that transformative change in paediatric oncology will not happen without great teamwork. What keeps me in the lab every day is the encouragement, advice and thought-provoking discussions I have with clinical colleagues, especially Nick Gottardo. It is easy to get distracted from the 'big picture' when dealing daily with the uncertainties of bench research, lack of funding and no job security. Having Nick Gottardo and other physicians value our research and skills and remind us of the urgent need find better therapies for kids with brain cancer is what keeps me striving to find the answers.

## On Challenges and Overcoming Them

Paediatric oncology and translational research is a team sport. Indeed, we work as a team of teams – multiple clinical disciplines taking care of patients, based on research generated across a very diverse range of specialized scientific fields. In a research lab, effective teamwork is essential to ensure a safe workplace, efficient use of limited resources and positive morale. Becoming a lab head and managing a growing team of high-achieving people, with diversity in culture, gender, and expertise, was a huge challenge for which I had received no prior training. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to undertake some leadership and management training at my institution. As part of this, I learnt more about myself, my own unconscious



motivators, my deficiencies, and how I am perceived by other people. This also helped me recognize and appreciate how and why other people behave. Understanding people has helped me be a better team leader and mentor. Another challenge has also been where I have recognized when a team member was not coping within our work environment. Being able to recognize that their mental health was suffering and seeking help and advice on how to deal with it has helped me be a more compassionate and understanding leader.

## On Balancing Career and Other Life Responsibilities

I would not be able to do my work without a large amount of support around me. My husband is an amazing support. He has been willing to relocate anywhere, even when this was at the expense of his own career. We work together to care for our child, both when he was younger and now. My family never make me feel guilty when work calls me away from home, or when I need to put in the long hours to meet a grant deadline. I make the effort to not miss out on important events, even though this means I need to put in time after hours to make up for it. This is a major bonus of having an academic career where my schedule is self-determined and essentially freed from rigid work hours, although the converse of this is that you never really switch your brain off. To manage this better, I run and listen to podcasts. I love traveling so I am also often trying to learn new a language and am always seeking different places to eat and new food to try.

## My Words of Wisdom for the Next Generation of Female Leaders

There is still so much progress needed for paediatric oncology. We need to attract the best and brightest minds to the field to help build on our existing knowledge. This means there are great opportunities to continue our collaborations

especially with our international partners, in particular cooperative trials groups. Research as a laboratory scientist is a very tough career, and there is no one path to success. I love the freedom being research scientist provides. It is a privilege to be able to focus my time on challenges within paediatric oncology that interest and excite me. I relish the task of using my initiative and judgment to focus on undiscovered aspects of childhood cancer that I think have potential to be important insights that might change the way we treat these diseases. However, when I was younger, I was so frustrated by the fact that there is no formula that guarantees my next position. Due to the nature of working within a limited funding environment, research positions and grant funding are scarce, making it very competitive. Being successful wasn't just about putting in the most hours, working with the best people or being the smartest in the room. My advice is to focus on what you're enjoying. Despite all the challenges, are you loving it? Do you get satisfaction, joy and fulfilment in each day, week, month? If you have passion for your work, it will get you through the many challenges thrown your way. Have confidence in yourself and your abilities, but don't be afraid of a career change either.



# KUSUMA KUMARY

## INDIA

**As one of the early paediatric oncologists in the state of Kerala, India, Dr. Kusuma Kumary was instrumental in establishing the Paediatric Oncology Department at the Regional Cancer Centre (RCC), Trivandrum, making advanced cancer treatment accessible to underprivileged children across the region.** She earned her medical degree (1976) and paediatrics post-graduation (1984) from the University of Kerala and had fellowships in paediatric oncology from the UK, USA, and Italy. Joining RCC in 1984, she developed the fledgling Paediatric unit into a leading 43-bed establishment with all modern facilities.

Throughout her 33-year career beginning as Lecturer in Paediatric oncology and culminating as Professor and Head of Paediatric Oncology and later the Additional Director, RCC, she has championed affordable cancer care, worked to start the D.M. course in Paediatric Oncology in her Centre, founded the "PRATYASHA", a support group comprising of cancer survivors and their parents, established a "Home Away from Home" for the Patients' families undergoing treatment and established a Reintegration project aimed at rehabilitation of these families into the society. Her efforts have been recognized with numerous awards, including the RV Lokeshwar Memorial PHO Oration, Indian Medical Association's Best Doctor Award and the

**Never bother  
about how much  
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important thing is  
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with what you  
know.**

Government of Kerala Special Award in Modern Medicine. With over 125 publications and a significant role in education and training of young professionals, her work emphasizes comprehensive patient care, including palliative and psycho-social support, indicative of her serious involvement in paediatric oncology practice in the state.

## On Relationships that Influenced My Career

I have been privileged to be acquainted with and work alongside many stalwarts in the field of oncology, many of whom have influenced my career and practice. Dr. M. Krishnan Nair and Dr. Padmanabhan of the RCC Trivandrum, and Dr. Hanumantha Rao, Dr. Dorothy Pearson and Dr. Morris Jones, Christie Hospital, Manchester are a few to name.

Dr. Krishnan Nair inspired me with the vision and necessity of a unique paediatric cancer care facility early in my career and encouraged me to take up the responsibility. He provided unconditional support in all my endeavors and gave me full freedom to work towards developing a system. He encouraged me to attend all important meetings and introduced me to prominent persons working in the field. He also arranged for my training nationally and internationally and facilitated collaboration with the Government authorities for the necessary sanctions and permissions while developing the department. He entrusted me with designing the full-fledged paediatric oncology ward in the new building of the RCC. When I was at the verge of burnout, Dr. Krishnan Nair inspired me by giving the advice - you cannot have sympathy to the point of self-extinction. He was a supportive mentor who advised me to take care of my personal life also amid my hectic and demanding professional career.

Dr. Hanumantha Rao Gattamineni was my mentor while I underwent training at the Christie Hospital and recommended me for the SIOP travel scholarship the first time it was introduced. He

nominated me for obtaining the UK CCSG membership and arranged for observation training in Manchester for the second time. He took special interest in updating me about the management of solid tumors, and helped to access international papers and publications which were not easily available in the early years. He kindled my interest in research and guided me in writing articles for the scientific journals.

## On Challenges and Overcoming Them

When I began my career, the concept of paediatric oncology was totally new in our state, and the idea of establishing a pediatric oncology facility was itself a huge challenge.

In my early days, RCC was functioning as part of the Government Medical College Hospital, Trivandrum, and paediatric patients were admitted under the Radiotherapy unit with no separate ward or support staff. With consistent effort and negotiations with the authorities and the then Radiotherapy Chiefs, I was able to procure 12 beds for paediatric cancer patients. Later, the Department of Nuclear Medicine in the Medical College shifted to a new OP and I was able to convince the hospital administration to allocate 3 rooms from the Nuclear Medicine OP for the paediatric oncology patients. When the new building for RCC was constructed, I could configure a full-fledged 43 bedded ward with enough rooms and space for the paediatric oncology department.

Both human and material resources were in shortage during the early days. The major challenges were non-availability of many anti-cancer drugs, discontinuous supply of locally available medicines, and non-existent purchase policy for anti-cancer drugs. After repeated efforts, I was able to convince the administration to formulate a purchase policy for the RCC and used personal contacts and influence to procure the locally unavailable chemotherapy medications and antibiotics from outside. To overcome manpower

shortage, I associated with other clinical Departments to post staff and assistants on temporary basis and made use of trainees from paediatrics and radiotherapy departments to carry out patient care duties. I also put in constant requests to the Government to create permanent positions in paediatric oncology, as a result of which the staff strength of the Department increased over time.

The lessons learned from my experience are that constant effort, integrity, positive attitude and the correct mindset are the keys to overcome the challenges in our path and achieve our goals, and it has made me stronger as a person, leader and administrator.

### On Balancing Career and Other Life Responsibilities

I am extremely grateful to my family for their support, understanding and encouragement throughout my career. The first day, I returned home in tears after seeing the plight of these unfortunate suffering children and my husband motivated me by saying: if you do not take care of them, who else will? From then on, he has stood alongside me as a pillar of strength and has supported me by sharing family responsibilities, including taking care of our child, while balancing our work and life. Hence, I was able to spend more time and energy towards my profession. My son, who was very young at the start of my professional life, demonstrated exemplary understanding and maturity beyond his age by not demanding my time, motherly care and attention, and instead preferring me to go to the hospital and be a “mother to sick children.” My family believed in me and held me together when I was facing stress and emotional burnout and was always there for me during the ups and downs of my career. Their unflinching support, sacrifice and positivity has been pivotal in making me the person I am today.

### My Words of Wisdom for the Next Generation of Female Leaders

Every life matters. Set a goal, work for it and regularly review the progress. Accept setbacks. Stay true to yourself. Sometimes risks must be taken for progress. Continuous learning is required, and work-life balance is important.

My advice for the young paediatric oncologists embarking on a career is that entering a career in paediatric oncology is a profound journey filled with challenges and rewards. Stay updated in the field and find out mentors who can guide you in your career. You must be honest, have compassion towards your patients and their families. Develop good communication skills and resilience. Pediatric oncology is emotionally taxing. Self-care and work-life balance is vital. The journey is difficult, but you can make a meaningful difference in the lives your patients and their families.

Never bother about how much you know, the important thing is what you can do with what you know. As you look back on your life, you will find that the moments that stand out are “the moments when you have done something for others”.



# MARIKO KAKAZU

## JAPAN

**Dr. Mariko Kakazu is a Japanese paediatric haematologist-oncologist with 19 years of experience in medicine.** She is dedicated to improving the survival rate of childhood cancer in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) such as Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar.

Dr. Kakazu left Japan 7 years ago to serve as a volunteer medical doctor with Japan Heart, a non-profit organization that provides free medical services in under-resourced areas. She played a vital role in establishing Japan Heart Children's Center in Cambodia and has served as the Director of Paediatrics since the inception of this hospital in 2018. The survival rate of childhood cancer in the hospital has improved from under 30% to over 50%. Dr. Kakazu is also committed to training the next generation of medical professionals.

In Cambodia, a large portion of medical professionals disappeared due to the mass atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge regime, leading to the collapse of the healthcare system. Consequently, there is a serious shortage of healthcare workers, making human resource development crucial for establishing a sustainable healthcare system in the country. Recognizing the utmost importance of capacity building in the region, Dr. Kakazu has trained over 30 medical professionals in Cambodia.

***"Nankurunaisa": Do  
the right thing and  
the rest will follow.***

***An Okinawan  
proverb***

## On Relationships that Influenced My Career

The first person who has been influential in my career development is my father, who passed away when I was in junior high school due to a brain tumor. He was a hardworking farmer, a loving husband, and a father. His death deeply impacted me and inspired me to dedicate my life to cancer treatment. During medical school, I was assigned to care for a 5-year-old boy with a malignant brain tumor, and he grew fond of me. Unfortunately, he passed away a year later despite intensive treatments, but his courageous battle against cancer greatly motivated me. Throughout this experience, it was the paediatricians who stood by him and supported his family until the end. Inspired by this, I decided to become a paediatric oncologist to help children like him.

The second influential relationship in my career development stems from my hometown, Okinawa, where the fierce World War II ground battle left virtually no hospitals and very few clinics and healthcare staff. Determined to improve the medical situation in Okinawa, I chose to work relentlessly in demanding training hospitals. With the support of my seniors, by the end of my training, the medical disparity between Okinawa and mainland Japan had been significantly reduced. During that time, I had the opportunity to hear a lecture by Ms. Kazuyo Watanabe from the Asia Children's Care League (ACCL), who supports paediatric cancer treatment in Vietnam. I was shocked to learn about the low survival rates of paediatric cancer in developing countries. Motivated to eliminate this medical disparity, I consulted with Ms. Watanabe, conducted on-site inspections, visited various organizations, and eventually got involved in the establishing a hospital to treat paediatric cancer in Cambodia.

## On Challenges and Overcoming Them

One significant challenge that I faced early in my career was pushing myself too hard to the point of

physical exhaustion. During my time as a medical trainee, I was eager to become a fully-fledged physician and ended up overworking myself, which hindered my growth and left me constantly frustrated. I took the initiative to discuss my concerns with friends and mentors, and I carved out time for self-reflection. Through this process, I gained a better understanding of my current situation, clarified my aspirations, and set specific goals, ultimately regaining a sense of composure.

Another challenge that I encountered was initiating medical activities in Cambodia. Operating in an environment vastly different from Japan, where infrastructure such as electricity, water, and roads was insufficient, required considerable courage, particularly when starting paediatric oncology care. Furthermore, despite the potential for curative treatment for paediatric cancers, some patients' families and local healthcare providers lacked belief in recovery, leading to instances where patients would return home without receiving treatment. Cultural differences with local healthcare providers also posed challenges, with remarks such as "Japanese work culture is crazy!" being directed at me. Nonetheless, I endeavored to improve the environment where possible, respected local cultures, collaborated closely with local healthcare providers to deliver paediatric oncology care, and gradually accumulated successful cases. Presently, we receive nearly 100 paediatric cancer patients annually from within Cambodia, and Cambodian physicians have taken the lead in providing paediatric oncology care. These experiences have reinforced my resilience and adaptability, teaching me the importance of perseverance, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative problem-solving in overcoming challenges within my career.

## On Balancing Career and Other Life Responsibilities

What was most helpful to me in balancing my career and other life responsibilities was the support of my family and friends. They understood my desire to improve the survival rate gap for

for paediatric cancer and supported my volunteer work abroad. Especially my mother, who always worried about me pushing myself too hard and getting sick, supported me in maintaining my health and overall well-being. While initially opposed to my volunteering in medical missions in Cambodia, she eventually came around after lengthy discussions and persuasion. Having time to spend with family and friends, even amidst the challenges of work, allowed me to refresh and recharge. Building strong relationships where we support each other has been instrumental in balancing career and personal obligations.

These principles have guided me through my journey, and I pass them on to those entering the field of paediatric oncology.

## **My Words of Wisdom for the Next Generation of Female Leaders**

My motto has been the Okinawan proverb 'Nankurunaisa.' It means 'Do the right thing and the rest will follow.' I always keep this in mind, choosing the path of integrity and embracing challenges, even if they are tough. It guides me through life's uncertainties with determination.

My message to younger professionals is the following:

1. Always choose the more challenging path. Opt for challenges that you won't regret, even if you fail. For me, this meant selecting a rigorous training hospital and joining an NGO. Embrace the paths that push you to grow.
2. Find mentors who suit you. Seek mentors who align with your personality, regardless of their role. My mentors include supervisors from my training hospital, senior doctors at the NGO, and Ms. Kazuyo Watanabe from ACCL, whom I often turn to for advice.
3. Treat yourself like your best friend. Prioritize self-care and well-being as you would for a loved one. Avoid overworking and damaging your health. Learn to balance work, family, friends, exercise, and rest. Remember to listen to the voice of your inner best friend and take care of yourself above all.



# JENNIFER GEEL

## SOUTH AFRICA

**Prof. Jennifer Geel is the Head of Paediatric Haematology-Oncology at Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital, former Chair of the South African Ministerial Advisory Committee on Cancer Control and Prevention and current Secretary-General of SIOP Africa.**

She is passionate about improving the survival and quality of life of children with cancer in Africa. She spent two years in clinical research settings in Cape Town and London before specialising in paediatrics and subspecialising in paediatric oncology. She has an interest in stem cell transplantation and is the principal investigator of the SA National Hodgkin lymphoma group.

Prof. Geel is an executive committee member of the South African Association of Paediatric Haematology-Oncology. Currently, she is involved in research on various childhood cancers and is a keen mentor of upcoming talent.

She founded a non-profit organisation, CARE (Cancer Awareness, Research and Education) for Kids with Cancer, to fund collaborative research in South Africa and works with teams of committed researchers to increase collaborative research in the region.

***I flow  
through life  
calmly and  
serenely.***



## On Relationships that Influenced My Career

My partner, Thandi Lewin, is my biggest supporter and I am where I am today because of her and my family.

People forget what a big deal it is for someone to agree to supervise a post-graduate degree. What supervisors put in compared to what they get out is completely disproportionate. I will never be able to pay back my PhD supervisors for all that they have done for me – their unfailing support inspires me in my own mentoring and supervisory roles, though I do not know if I will ever reach their heights. I met Daynia Ballot in 2003 in the start of my paediatrics training. When I received the news that my father had died in a car accident while we were doing a neonatal grand round, she stopped everything and offered to take me home. I will never forget her tough, no-nonsense genuine kindness which is ongoing. Monika Metzger, my content supervisor, combines an incredible work ethic, a razor-sharp mind and infinite kindness. I consider Monika to be a doyenne of childhood and adolescent Hodgkin lymphoma and I was so very grateful when she agreed to supervise my project. Together, the two of them provided a nurturing space that allowed me to grow in my own time, yet they were always available whenever I needed them, and they did not hold back in their thoughtful critique of my work so that it could be better.

## On Challenges and Overcoming Them

The most recent examples that come to mind are the combined challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, a fire at our hospital and loadshedding. Loadshedding is the South African solution to a massively undercapacitated electricity grid, with ongoing electricity shortages both at home and at work. This diabolical combination made it really hard to work on my PhD – I became head of our unit half way through the project, then suddenly COVID-19 happened and a year later a hospital fire forced us to relocate all our patients and files and

set up shop in a new place for a few months. Luckily, I work with really strong teams and we were able to continue to provide a quality clinical service and continue our research, but it was hard. My colleagues, many of whom are also friends, were pragmatic and strategic and we worked well together to plan how to overcome the obstacles. We kept up our routines of regular meetings to discuss patients and issues, celebrated important events, and remembered to laugh and be grateful.

I learned that life throws curve balls, and yet we emerged from the chaos stronger and more accomplished, with new skills. I learned that a hot water bottle with water heated on a gas stove, rechargeable lights, blankets and a puppy at my feet were more than enough to get through the winter early morning data-capture and thesis-writing. I had planned to take a sabbatical but it just never happened with all that was happening, and I owe my team a huge debt of gratitude for carrying the clinical load.

## On Balancing Career and Other Life Responsibilities

I have yet to achieve work-life balance – it is an ongoing battle and I constantly feel that I could be a better mom, a better doctor and a better partner. I have always included my children in my work as much as possible and they have been enormously helpful in listening to me practice presentations since they were about six years old. They pick up errors, tell me when things do not make sense and give excellent critique on the slides. They take pride in my achievements and I feel that they are a part of my success. I have tried hard to prioritise them and they remind me, quite vocally, when I am not paying them enough attention!

I try to be present for my children when they need me, and love watching them play sports. I remind myself to say “yes” or “why not” instead of an automatic “no.” If I get a chance to go to an awards ceremony or sporting event I take it, even if it is during the day, and make up the time by doing

extra work after hours. My partner and I try to make sure at least one of us is there for all major events – parent-teachers meetings, medical appointments, sporting events, etc. We have a live-in housekeeper-nanny-auntie, Sarah, who makes it all possible. We could not do the work that we do without her.

years ago to try to calm me down: “I flow through life calmly and serenely”. It’s stuck with me, and I’m still trying to achieve it.

## **My Words of Wisdom for the Next Generation of Female Leaders**

If I could talk to my 25-year old self, I’d advise myself to learn diplomacy and tact! I was ridiculously shy as a child and am still very introverted, so I have compensated by creating a façade of strength and confidence. I’m still working on expressing what I feel without being abrasive. I would tell myself that good times are coming, that I will live the most wonderful life full of love and meaning and that I should not worry – I will achieve more than I ever dreamed possible. That vulnerability is a sign of strength.

My advice to people coming into the field is to get to know yourself. Go to therapy if you can possibly afford it and become aware of what makes you tick, why you chose this career and why you respond in certain ways. Much of what we do is influenced by unconscious impulses, and the people we meet, especially the parents and children, are so very fragile at the point when we encounter them for the first time, and at the times when we have to tell that their child has relapsed or will die. Listen more than you talk – counselling is about bringing people gently to a truth that they may have already sensed, not about breaking down their defences or talking at them. Always leave room for a little hope, because without it, people cannot survive. Always be honest with them, and they will be able to trust you. It is a great privilege working with children with cancer, and an even greater privilege to be with a family at the time when their child is dying. It is a hard, emotional, intense job but it is also meaningful and rewarding.

A friend gave me an affirmation more than thirty



# MILENA VILLARROEL

## CHILE

**Dr. Milena Villarroel is a Paediatric Hemato Oncologist with the Faculty of Medicine, University of Chile.** She is the Head of Oncology Unit at the Hospital Luis Calvo Mackenna, a paediatric public hospital part of the Chilean National Pediatric Cancer Program (PINDA) from the Ministry of Health. Since 2003, she is member of the Administrative Committee of PINDA and National Coordinator of Sarcoma Protocols and Neuroblastoma. She is a Founding member of the Latin American Pediatric Oncology Group (GALOP), and had actively participated in developing and conducting independent regional studies in Latin America as Coordinator of Metastatic Ewing Sarcoma protocol and Rare Tumors Initiative. In 2020, she assumed the role of Chair of GALOP, being very much committed to enhancing close cooperation within the region in research and treatment of paediatric cancer. She has developed a robust background in research and collaboration, addressing areas such as global initiatives, paediatric sarcoma and rare tumors, translational research, and febrile neutropenia.

Moreover, her engagement with international collaboration extends globally as the Chilean Delegate and President-Elect of the Latin-American Society of Pediatric Oncology (SLAOP), a member of the International Society of Pediatric Oncology (SIOP), involved in Advocacy,

**"Attitude is a  
little thing that  
makes a big  
difference"**

**Winston  
Churchill**

and holding positions on the Regional Advisory Committee and ARIA Steering Committee from St Jude's Global Initiative. She received the Trajectory Award from the Colegio Médico de Chile in 2023 and from the Third Latinamerican Women's Leader Forum in 2024.

## On Relationships that Influenced My Career

Throughout my career, I have had the privilege of collaborating with remarkable individuals who have left an indelible mark on both my professional and personal development. Dr. Humberto del Pozo, my first boss and mentor, stands out as a visionary figure with a profound dedication to treating children and adolescents with cancer in Chile since the 1970s. His emphasis on quality and continuous self-improvement instilled in me a genuine work ethic that has shaped my approach to my profession. Working alongside luminaries like Dr. Juan Quintana and Victoria Beresi further enriched my understanding of excellence in healthcare. Dr. Gastón Rivera, a colleague of Dr. del Pozo and a successful practitioner at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, not only excelled in his career but also remained committed to uplifting his home country. His mentorship and guidance during my early career, providing insights into patient care and oncology with a strong research orientation, significantly influenced my professional practice.

Moreover, the collaborative efforts of my peers at PINDA, particularly Drs. Lautaro Vargas and Myriam Campbell, were pivotal in shaping my understanding of cooperative teamwork from the nascent stages of my career. Participating in the establishment of Latin American GALOP Group alongside distinguished individuals like Drs. Luis Castillo, Marcelo Scopinaro, Sergio Petrilli, Algimir Brunetto, and Guillermo Chantada demonstrated the power of regional cooperation

in advancing oncology research with limited resources. This experience underscored the importance of generating credible evidence tailored to our region, fueling my passion and determination to contribute meaningfully to the field. The collective impact of these exceptional individuals has been transformative, propelling me to strive for excellence and collaboration in all facets of my professional journey.

## On Challenges and Overcoming Them

Starting my career as a head of a unit at a young age posed significant challenges, especially amidst a hierarchical leadership environment dominated by older male counterparts. Rather than conforming to this traditional leadership style, I chose to persist in fostering strong consensus among my team members and aligning them effectively to tasks where they excelled, leading to improved results with less effort and time expended compared to simply imposing strategies. This allowed the conformation of a robust and committed team, the backbone of any successful endeavor, with a diversity that fosters innovation and creativity.

In Latin America, challenges often manifest in the form of constrained resources, necessitating strategic resource management and innovative solutions to overcome obstacles and drive progress in various fields. This required me to recognize the power of effective planning, identifying the value in existing tools, and embracing a culture of continuous quality improvement. This philosophy extended beyond my immediate unit to encompass broader regional initiatives as well, emphasizing the importance of leveraging available resources intelligently and strategically. Acknowledging the significance of thorough planning, multi-centric collaboration, valuing clinical research, and pursuing a commitment to enhancing quality, not only helped to overcome these constraints but also laid a foundation for sustainable progress.

## On Balancing Career and Other Life Responsibilities

Balancing career aspirations with personal responsibilities is a delicate dance that requires support and understanding from loved ones and colleagues. In my case, having a supportive husband proved instrumental in maintaining this equilibrium. Together, we navigated the complexities of our respective career demands, fostering a partnership built on mutual respect and collaboration. His unwavering support allowed us to synchronize our ambitions while ensuring that both our professional and personal needs were met. Furthermore, having understanding children who always felt loved and cared for created a nurturing environment where I could focus on my career with peace of mind. Additionally, fostering a sense of camaraderie within my team was vital. By cultivating strong relationships based on trust and support among colleagues, we formed a network of individuals who had each other's backs. This team companionship not only enhanced productivity and morale but also provided a safety net that alleviated some of the challenges of balancing work and personal life. Together, these elements created a supportive ecosystem that empowered me to successfully navigate the intricate balance between career responsibilities and personal commitments

## My Words of Wisdom for the Next Generation of Female Leaders

Seize the myriad opportunities that come your way, recognizing that success is often the culmination of consistent effort over time. Change may not manifest immediately; it demands dedication and perseverance, even during moments when progress seems remote. Remember that each day of hard work contributes to the foundation of your future

achievements, no matter how distant they may appear. When others question how you managed to reach your current position, reflect on the fact that you were once in their shoes facing similar uncertainties. Embrace the journey, stay resilient in the face of challenges, and trust in the process of continual growth and learning. By remaining steadfast in your pursuits and maintaining a long-term perspective, you are actively shaping your path towards success, step by step.



# EDITH GRYNSZPANCHOLC

## ARGENTINA

**Edith Grynszpancholc is a bereaved mother of Natalí, who died from cancer at the age of 9.** At that moment, she had three other kids. Two years after Natalí's death, she gave birth to another baby. Nowadays, she is also a dedicated grandmother of 7 kids.

Soon after Natalí's death, she knew that she could not stand without doing something that could benefit others, doing something for the betterment of others' life. With a group of friends and family, she founded the Natalí Dafne Flexer Foundation ( FNDF ) in her memory.

FNDF provides direct services to more than 1,200 families each month in its 10 locations in Argentina. It is active in other levels of intervention with Doctors, Nurses, Psychologists, Schools and in Research. FNDF established direct relations with Governments and Authorities and generates Advocacy actions.

She is involved in the National, Regional and International work through different Networks: the National Network of Organizations helping children with cancer in Argentina, and the Psychosocial Chapter of the Latin American Society of Pediatric Oncology. For 13 years, she represented Latinamerica as a Board Member of the CCI. She is a member of the new Essential Medicines Working Group at the SIOP, which collaborates with the WHO Global Initiative.

***Be aware that  
you serve the  
families; trust  
that you are  
going to do the  
best for them!***

## On Relationships that Influenced My Career

I am thankful to Dr. Enrique Schwartzman, a very well-known Argentinean oncologist, who trusted in me and taught me everything I needed when I started the Foundation. He also believed that I could understand the medical issues that will influence and shape real access to treatment, the challenges we will face, at that point, and in the future.

The other person who was very influential was my father, with whom I worked in his industry. He showed me “in practice” the value of not feeling economically dependent, to keep the freedom to function as it is needed: no convenience guiding the decisions. It was especially important in the Foundation’s development as a very transparent and independent organization.

## On Challenges and Overcoming Them

The services that the Natalí Dafne Flexer Foundation provided proved, very early, to be very useful and were requested not only by families, but also by Doctors and other institutions. The challenge at that moment was translated into the fact that the Foundation went through a crisis of growth. Not every person in the organization agreed with the changes needed and, on the other hand, the fear was of losing control of the development and the “depersonalization” and loss of quality of the services given to families. It was my personal decision to go forward with the changes, slowly and one by one and I sought continuous advice from qualified professionals. Now, we deliver services to more than 1,100 families each month throughout Argentina.

Because of my character, I was asked to be part of the National Government of Argentina. At first, I accepted and worked from the beginning on Health issues. Soon, I realized that I didn’t know “how to play this sport” when I did not agree with the way they manage the situations and the time it took.

From that moment, I have very clear mind that there is no way to be directly involved, for me. We have now a clear policy on the relationship with Authorities and Governments at national or regional levels and also with the Pharma and other Industries.

## On Balancing Career and Other Life Responsibilities

As a bereaved mother, I had a personal and deep relationship with my work that did not allow me to take my time for personal desires, other than taking care or sharing time with my other kids and, afterwards, my grandchildren. I thought that surviving Natalí was only possible if I dedicated the rest of my life to her memory. Despite her illness and her own situation, she showed a strong empathy to other kids in treatment. She was very sensitive.

I used to work 24/7 for almost 20 years, until I started extraordinarily strong Psychological Therapy. Only then I could think of myself as someone other than “Natalí’s mother.” Then, I started to take care of myself, my physical wellbeing, doing Gym and Sports. I returned to my passion for Photography and travelling. I am also learning to edit the pictures I take and starting to digitalize and prepare albums of the thousands of printed pictures I have taken during my kids’ childhood.

Definitively, taking it seriously and putting effort during many Therapy Sessions opened the door to my inner desires of living a meaningful life and enjoying being alive, again.

## My Words of Wisdom for the Next Generation of Female Leaders

Be aware of families that you serve, trust that you are going to do the best for them. Thus, there is nothing that can be out from the scope of your organization, in terms of access to treatment and care and quality of life.

The Foundation needs to know and understand your local situation and the forces that sustain the positive situations and those forces that promote and sustain the negative ones, in order to plan advocacy actions and generate systemic changes. I wish I knew and understood it earlier.

There are internal processes, from the procurement to the delivery of medicines, that contribute to effective access to quality medicines, for example. The Foundation needs to know and understand that chain, why it is designed in that way, the responsible people involved and, sometimes, the ridiculous steps and requirements. The ideal is to propose specific changes or suggest which steps the health system can suppress.

It is a substantial change in the role of the helping organizations, to be no longer seen only as an emotional aspects' guardian or just a resources provider, but an influence player within the Health System.

As an Ashoka fellow, I had a dedicated advisor, and we worked together for an extended period on understanding the concept of Systemic change, learn how to analyze a System' forces and behaviors and, then, thinking on how to generate systemic changes.





# CRYSTAL MACKALL

## USA

Crystal L Mackall, MD, is the Ernest and Amelia Gallo Family Professor of Pediatrics and Medicine at Stanford University, the Founding Director of the Stanford Center for Cancer Cell Therapy, and Director of the Parker Institute for Cancer Immunotherapy at Stanford. During a 27-year tenure at NCI culminating as Chief of the Pediatric Oncology Branch and Head of the Immunology Section and since 2016 at Stanford, she has led an internationally recognized translational research program focused on immune-oncology. Her work has advanced understanding of fundamental immunology and translated this understanding for the treatment of human disease with a major focus on children's cancers. She is a member of the National Academy of Medicine, American Society of Clinical Investigation and American Academy of Physicians, a fellow of the AACR Academy and the Academy of Immunooncology. She received the Smalley Award for outstanding contributions to cancer immunotherapy from the Society for the Immunotherapy of Cancer, the AACR-St. Baldrick's Distinguished Achievement Award for Pediatric Cancer Research, and the Pediatric Oncology Award from the American Society of Clinical Oncology. She has published over 275 manuscripts, her h-index in April 2024 is 207 according to google scholar and has co-founded 4 biotech companies.

***"Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself....whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should... Strive to be happy."***

***Max Ehrmann***

## On Relationships that Influenced My Career

I have been inspired by three physician-scientists. Steve Rosenberg MD, PhD, was the first to inspire me to believe that the immune system can be used to treat cancer. This began with a publication from his group in 1984 and he continues to inspire me to this day with his tireless efforts to cure cancers using our patients' own immune systems. Ron Gress MD was my primary bench mentor. He taught me how to think like a scientist and as a young physician, he taught me the culture of science. He also helped me create a personal ethical framework that I continue to rely on today to navigate the complexities of work as a translational physician-scientist. Phil Pizzo MD inspired me to be bold in my work to improve outcomes for children with dread diseases, always reminding me of the responsibility we have to patients and families to bring cures to children wherever possible.

## On Challenges and Overcoming Them

I grew up in a working class family and was a first generation college graduate. I attended college and medical school and matriculated in my Residency at institutions that were designed to train community physicians and were not considered elite academic centers. Transitioning from this world to the rarified world of science and academia was a challenge, requiring not only a steep learning curve regarding the fundamentals of basic science and clinical investigation, but also changing my perspective to open up the possibility that my work could directly change the global status quo. This transition was associated with significant anxiety for me that could have easily resulted in me stepping back and avoiding risk. But I did a lot of personal work to deal with my anxieties and to build my confidence so that I could affect change. Many young people I meet today feel similar anxieties and I encourage them to take the time and do the work needed to listen to their anxieties and develop tools and practices to enable them to move beyond them.

A second challenge relates to maintaining a personally acceptable work-life balance and I continue to navigate this challenge imperfectly, even at this stage of my life and career. The right balance differs for everyone and may vary depending upon where you are in your life. My spouse and I raised two children and I always believed that the most important job I had was that of a parent and a mother. In order to succeed in that role, it was important for me to always have clarity that my family came first even though I was and remain incredibly dedicated to my work. These days, my children are grown and need me less but I find that attending to my own personal wellness is increasingly important as I age. So I am still making sure that the "professional Crystal" hears loud and clear that taking care of the "personal Crystal" comes first. Sustaining an appropriate balance is so important for sustaining us for long haul careers.

## On Balancing Career and Other Life Responsibilities

For me, step one in balancing work-life responsibilities is having a clarity of purpose and providing yourself a clear message around what comes first in your life. But beyond that, there is much more to be done if one wants to be both personally and professionally successful. If you have a family, choosing a partner who is truly willing to share the responsibilities that come with running a household and raising children will ease the challenges. Some days, you will step up on the homefront and on other days, your partner will need to do it. I also greatly treasure efficiency because time has always been my scarcest resource. Do not underestimate the value of your future time and when approached about taking on new responsibilities, carefully assess much time the new activity will take and whether it will enhance you professionally or personally. Many women, including myself, have trouble saying no, but sometimes saying no is absolutely the right thing to do.

## My Words of Wisdom for the Next Generation of Female Leaders

I encourage each individual to “own your own personal narrative”. It is easy to look around and get the impression that you are somehow less prepared, less talented or have less opportunities than your colleagues but no matter where you came from or what experiences you have, I find that everyone brings attributes that can be turned into strengths given the right attitude. For instance, coming from a non-elite background made me less afraid to fail compared to some of my colleagues for whom the expectations were very high. As a result, I have always felt comfortable taking professional risks and that has been a positive for my career. I also encourage young people to put time and energy into your psychological and emotional health, just as we put time and energy into enhancing our intellectual strengths. As far as advice to my young self, I would encourage myself to be open to the twists and turns that life provides and greet them with openness, because none of us know the road we are destined to travel.

The Desiderata Text by Max Ehrmann speaks to me, here are a few of my favorite excerpts:

*“Go placidly amid the noise and haste and remember what peace there may be in silence...Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune....Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself....whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should...Strive to be happy.”*



# GWENDA ANGA-LESTER

PAPUA NEW GUINEA/  
SOLOMON ISLANDS

Dr. Gwenda Anga-Lester is a paediatrician with an interest in Paediatric Oncology from Manus Island, Papua New Guinea (PNG), and Malaita Province, Solomon Islands.

She graduated from the University of PNG in 2010 as a paediatrician. She has worked as a paediatrician doing general paediatrics and paediatric oncology at the Port Moresby General Hospital since 2010.

Dr. Gwenda Anga-Lester is the first paediatrician to specialise in paediatric oncology, providing leadership and advice to medical staff across PNG.

**"One day at a time;  
after all, today is  
the tomorrow  
you worried about  
yesterday"**

*Billy Graham*

## On Relationships that Influenced My Career

As a registrar, I worked with a senior Paediatrician Dr Mobumo Kiromat, who also had an interest in paediatric oncology; however, due to the fact that in PNG, infectious diseases remain the overwhelming cause for morbidity in children, it was difficult to focus only on paediatric cancers; So she encouraged me to take paediatrics and paediatric oncology up and develop a service for PNG children seeking cancer care.

My training in paediatric oncology was made possible with funding from the RE ROSS grant through an application by Prof. Trevor Duke who has been very supportive and instrumental in Paediatric training in PNG. With the support from this grant and the PNG National Department of Health, I was able to do a 1-year fellowship with the Children's Cancer Centre at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, Australia. Returning home after this 1-year fellowship, with the help of Prof. Micheal Sullivan, Prof. Trevor Duke and the PMGH Hospital Management, we were able to set up the following:

- A separate 12 bed children's oncology ward which now receives paediatric patients from all over PNG for diagnosis and treatment
- Training for 2 nurses in safe chemotherapy
- Adapted cancer protocol for childhood cancers
- Collaborations with international colleagues (for example, SIOP-Oceania)
- Ongoing training for local registrars and nurses in childhood cancers
- Development of a cancer registry and palliative care service.

## On Challenges and Overcoming Them

My main challenges are advocating for childhood cancer against more pressing priorities, like infectious diseases, and against adult cancers, which have a higher incidence, and doing this in a resource-limited setting. Having a list of achievable

priorities and focusing on one achievable task at a time helps a lot.

My continued awareness-raising and advocacy with my immediate supervisors, the hospital management, and the Department of Health have resulted in gaining support for childhood cancer services. This would also not be achievable without having supportive mentors and colleagues.

Another challenge is the fact that about 80% of patients with paediatric cancers present late, thus curative treatment is not possible. This can be very discouraging when most patients who seek medical help pass away. However, when one of the many patients completes treatment and is doing well, this encourages the team to keep trying and working hard.

## On Balancing Career and Other Life Responsibilities

I can balance career and other life responsibilities to an extent by trying as much as possible to 'leave work at work'. I also have a very supportive and understanding husband and family (parents and my younger sister) who are always there to help me.

## My Words of Wisdom for the Next Generation of Female Leaders

Prioritize, focus, and always look for a positive in every situation!



# PATRICIA BLANC

## FRANCE

**Ms. Patricia Blanc has twenty years' of experience in a major French bank, specializing in audit, strategy, development, project management, and human resources.** With a rich international experience, including residencies in South Africa and New-York, she co-founded the "*Imagine for Margo: Children without Cancer*" non-profit association in 2011 after losing her daughter, Margaux, to an aggressive brain tumor at the age of 14. During her disease, Margaux raised over 100,000 euros to fund research and left three powerful words in her notebook, which are the guiding ethos of the association: Go, Fight, Win. *Imagine for Margo* has raised and allocated 20 million EUR to 60 research projects to accelerate innovations for paediatric cancer in Europe, directly benefiting more than 7,000 children. Patricia plays an active advocacy role and closely collaborates with French and international leading organizations to advance paediatric oncology research and catalyze investments in this field. She serves on various committees, including the European Cancer Plan's Monitoring Committee, ACCELERATE Steering Committee, ITCC Advocates and Brain Tumor Committees, CCI Europe and SFCE's Scientific Council.

Patricia Blanc received the Vanity Fair Award for the 50th Most Influential French People in the World and the French National Order of Merit for her leadership as the President of *Imagine for Margo*.

**Go,**

**Fight,**

**Win!**

## On Relationships that Influenced My Career

The journey of *Imagine for Margo* owes much of its trajectory to the unwavering support and guidance of Professor Gilles Vassal, Gustave Roussy Comprehensive Cancer Center in Villejuif, France. In the nascent stages of the association, Dr. Vassal stood as a beacon of knowledge and mentorship, generously sharing insights into paediatric oncology, research methodologies, the critical need for medications, funding needs, and the intricate landscape of mobilizing stakeholders. Twelve years ago, the landscape was daunting with many barriers, particularly from industry and regulatory entities, hindering progress.

Dr. Vassal, acting as a mentor, equipped me with the tools to navigate this complex terrain and to become an active advocate for childhood cancer research and support, both at the national and European levels.

Pivotal in shaping the course of my life and career was the steadfast presence of my husband. Our union marked a paradigm shift in my professional aspirations, transitioning from a trajectory in auditing and finance in France to a path of global exploration and advocacy. Together, we made pivotal career decisions, drawing strength from the foundation of our relationship. Our shared spirit of adventure led us to embrace expatriate life, immersing ourselves in the vibrant cultures of South Africa and New York. Through his unwavering support and the ethos of daring to defy boundaries, I embraced a mindset of boundless exploration, recognizing the transformative power of embracing diverse perspectives and experiences, enriching not only our lives but also those of our children.

## On Challenges and Overcoming Them

I had honed my skills in audits and investment banking operations. Amidst the familiar rhythms of work and the camaraderie of colleagues, a profound

turning point awaited, inspired by the memory of my daughter. Despite my deep-rooted expertise in finance, I made a monumental decision to plunge into uncharted territory.

With no prior knowledge of paediatric oncology or the intricacies of research and no advocacy experience, the path ahead seemed daunting. Yet, fueled by the belief that change was imperative for all children battling cancer, I forged ahead. The resounding echo of Margaux' message inspired me to "Go, Fight, Win!".

This mantra became a steadfast reminder of the inexorable determination that guided my steps. Despite the uncertainties, I embraced the challenge, propelled by the conviction that every action, no matter how daunting, held the potential to make a difference. Margaux' words encapsulated the essence of our mission, urging me onward in the pursuit of transformative changes for children facing the scourge of cancer.

*Imagine for Margo* supports paediatric oncology research, notably through our "Children without Cancer" races. Drawing inspiration from our experiences in New York, where we engaged in many charitable events, organizing these solidarity races felt natural. Despite strong skepticism we received in France, we persisted in our vision. Twelve years later, the impact speaks volumes. Last year the association saw high participation rates and shattered fundraising records, with approximately 7,000 runners and over 2.7 million EUR raised by *Imagine for Margo*. With the development of solidarity races in collaboration with organizations in Luxembourg, Belgium, and Spain, our goal is to collectively allocate 10 million EUR each year to the same European research projects selected by our shared Scientific Committee and selection process. Our perseverance underscores the power of collective action in realizing our mission to combat childhood cancer.

## On Balancing Career and Other Life Responsibilities

Amidst our demanding professional endeavors, my husband and I steadfastly prioritize our family and cherished moments with loved ones. These shared experiences infuse me with boundless energy and drive, fueling my pursuit of personal and professional ambitions. Embracing activities like running marathons together further strengthens our bond and reinforces our commitment to a balanced, fulfilling life. Ultimately, this philosophy, centered on family, love, and holistic well-being, resonates as the true measure of success for me.

## My Words of Wisdom for the Next Generation of Female Leaders

To my younger self at 25 years of age, I would advise not to hesitate in pursuing passions and chasing dreams. While initially studying law with aspirations of becoming a judge, my journey led me to discover a passion for finance and audits during my undergraduate years. This diverse foundation paved the way for a fulfilling career, marked by international experiences in South Africa and the United States. Twelve years ago, the decision to pivot once more, leaving behind familiarity to establish and lead *Imagine for Margo*, was driven by an unwavering commitment to fighting childhood cancer.

In the realm of oncology, childhood cancers pose unique challenges. Despite the inadequacies in medications and resources, there is an imperative to relentlessly pursue solutions while remaining deeply empathetic towards affected families. In this context, the human aspect is essential, especially in a situation of very poor prognosis cancer. Balancing the rigors of this battle with selfcare and cherishing moments with loved ones becomes essential. Remembering to nurture personal passions and finding joy outside work serves as a vital anchor amidst the demanding landscape of fighting cancer.

My daughter's inspiring message, found in her

notebook after her death :

- Go: take the opportunities that come to you, and do not miss a chance to follow your dreams.
- Fight against all the hard moments that will come to you.
- Win, accomplish the things you want, follow your dreams and always try to be a better person.

Both I and the *Imagine for Margo* association live with this message daily.





# LAURA TAN

## SINGAPORE

Ms. Laura Tan works at the VIVA-University Children's Cancer Centre at the National University Hospital as an Outreach Program Senior Nursing Lecturer where she focuses on expanding Nursing Training to Nurses in the Asia Pacific Region, thus helping the nurses to achieve their vision of how Paediatric Oncology Nursing can help transform the lives of children diagnosed with cancer.

She also works with St. Jude's Children Research Hospital, the Kandang Kerbau Women's & Children's Hospital with VIVA to establish St. Jude Asia Pacific Nursing Institute, focusing on planning and training regional nurses to enhance and provide quality nursing care for all diagnosed with Childhood Cancer.

She also supports and guides regional nurses in providing Patient Family Education to ensure continuity of care whilst patients are nursed at home or in halfway houses.

**Always look for  
an opportunity  
to care because  
hard work  
polishes you  
into a gem.**

## On Relationships that Influenced My Career

Many people have influenced me in life. Several giants have and are still guiding me as I forge my way through life's streams. Two of the most influential persons that God has placed in my path are my bosses, past and current. My boss back in the 1990s was Prof. Quah Thuan Chong. He is a quiet man who guided us, nurses, by journeying with us as we work. He seldom has demands, only suggestions that we follow. One memorable experience was back in 1995, when he walked in with a concerned look on his face. Later, he shared with me that there was a rising trend in Central Venous Access Device (CVAD) infection rate in our paediatric cohort. This was proven in a research study that 11 per thousand CVAD were getting infected. This was very serious indeed because it meant that there was increased risk of death due to septic shock and additional exposure to antibiotic use, disrupting the treatment plans for many of our patients and the treatment cost was escalating for this group of patients. He allowed us to decide what to do next, and a very quick assessment of our workflow showed that the key factor was having busy house officers to connect CVADs to IV infusion bags, and to perform blood cultures and tests on patients. We needed to get our nurses trained and through the cooperation of every nurse on our team, we managed to reduce the infection rate from 11 per thousand catheter days to 2.4 per thousand catheter days, whilst Port-a-Cath went from 3.1 per every thousand catheter days to 0.8 per thousand catheter days. This was a triumph for every nurse on our team and we learnt a valuable lesson that if we work together and grow together, we can achieve remarkable things. It is actually more than teamwork; it is important to know that the entire team is like a family. This would include the housekeepers too.

My second boss, Prof Allen Yeoh, was the

catalyst for me to move from Paediatrics to Paediatric Oncology. Both my bosses have a strong belief that nurses are the key to perfecting the art of Paediatric Oncology care. To find nurses who devote their best efforts in caring for patients, we need nurses who are committed, skilled and loving. Prof. Allen is a doctor who takes people at their own value and will help them to be a part of the team. He sees and understands the complexity of a person. He accepts all that we can offer to make the team work better. He would offer guidance and is generous in understanding. Prof. Allen and Prof. Quah understand that each person has their own strengths and, with support and guidance, they can bring out the best in people.

Prof. Tan Poh Lin, another boss, helped me understand that transplant is not merely to achieve a cure through diligent nursing care but there is a need to understand the complexity of the transplant process. She taught me the vigilance of nurses is the reason we can control SOS, BOOP, GVHD and other infections. BMT process needs trained nurses with an eye to detail and the confidence to raise the warning alarm when a patient status changes throughout day or night.

## On Challenges and Overcoming Them

There are many challenges in the wake of Paediatric Oncology nursing. Here I will return to share troubles that we faced during the early years. A CVAD access training program was started when we discovered the rising trend of CVADs infections. We realized that there was a need to train our nurses how to access the CVADs and blood draws. In those days, nurses in Singapore were not allowed to needle a patient on their torso but only on their hands and arms. To start a the CVAD Training Course, I needed to get permission for nurses to access the port-a-Cath, in NUH. The resounding help and endorsement I got from the oncologist in our team encouraged me to push ahead and I spoke

with our Director of Nursing, Ms. Lee Yee Kew. She was supportive and kind. She was even willing to help us grow in Nursing Quality Improvement Projects that would later help us improve the nursing care and services. Thus, we were able to launch the Paediatric Oncology Training for CVAD Care. The nurses, after 3 months, took over the care of CVADs for our cohort of patients. At the same time, we realized there was a need to train moms and dads to flush CVADs at home, thus a course was made available to teach them.

Procedures were introduced for parents to dress catheter sites, to flush CVADs where they needed to learn how to handle the syringes, swab the closed port access site, perform the withdrawal technique, discard the syringes and use syringes to flush the device with normal saline and heparinized saline. Our patient's parents were incredibly supportive of carrying out these procedures at home.

There was one parent who had a child who needed hyperalimentation at home. I was asked to help with the care of CVAD access and deaccess for the child at home. I needed to train the parents so I brought along with me another paediatric oncology nurse, Ms Cing Khan Lian, to carry out the training and the father very soon took over the care of CVAD at home and this lasted for many years. As the child grew taller, the CVAD was revised and her father has since worked with us to transfer the care of CVAD to his daughter under his supervision.

A miracle happened for us when we asked St. Jude for help. Dr. Ayda Nambayan, a Filipina nurse who was working in St. Jude's Outreach Program, immediately took up the call for help. I was given the privilege to be in St. Jude for 3 months (Attachment Program). Whilst I was in St. Jude, I was taught how to write SOP, how to run a CVAD clinic, join meetings and weekly tutorials / lectures containing updates for all trained staff. I was also attached to the Nursing Education

Department where I gathered lots of tips from Mr. Sam, the then Director of Training. A year after my attachment, the faculty of University of Pennsylvania came on board to teach us, nurses both from NUH and KKH, the science and treatment of Paediatric Oncology. Immediately after this course, our nurses who attended the course graduated, we were graced by Dr Emily Ang, Deputy Director (NUH) and Current Dean of Alice Lee School Of Nursing, and Assistant directors Ms. Helena Mahesan (KKH) and Ms. Mabel Ong (NUH). It is very clear to our team that we are very blessed to have St. Jude Children's Research Hospital to guide us. We found an experienced sister who was willing to teach and guide us. St. Jude team have a big heart to share, that allows us to respond with a willingness to learn.

My bigger hurdle was to plan a training for nurses. The Paediatric Oncology Nursing Care was a course that embodied the Knowledge of Paediatric Oncology, Principles of Care and Caring Elements - active listening, reflective thinking and sharing, open-ended questioning. I needed to work on the course and look for lectures to train the nurses, having done that, I need to get accreditation for the course with the hard work of my mentors, namely Ms. Emily Ang. We were SNB Accredited in year 2009 and we managed to achieve ANCC accreditation in Year 2012.

With in our region, we trained nurses from Philippines, Davao, CMC, India, Myanmar, Cambodia, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia. Currently, I am training nurses from Rachel House, Indonesia. Rachel House is a palliative care service that helps patients in the later stage of their disease process. They also help to support patients and parents with limited resources.

We also collaborated with VIVA Foundation to start the VIVA ASIA Nursing Institute, where we trained nurses from Philippines both from Davao,

Southern Philippines General Hospital and Manila, Philippines General Hospital. We also started St. Jude's VIVA Asia Nursing Symposium in Year 2015, which runs yearly back-to-back with the VIVA FORUM and BMT Spring School. The St. Jude's VIVA ASIA Nursing Symposium not only updates our nurse's knowledge of Paediatric Oncology, but also it showcases the Nursing achievements of countries in our region. I happily would add that St Jude's support is always with us and all great doctors like Prof. Anjo Veerman and Prof. Rupert Handgretinger and our St. Jude Doctors – Dr. Carlos Rodriguez-Galindo, Dr. Justin Baker, Dr. Catherine Lam, Dr. Sally Blair, Dr. Courtney Sullivan and Liz Sniderman.

### On Balancing Career and Other Life Responsibilities

I am very privileged to have a wonderful mom who always stepped in when I needed to be away from home and my child. It was still heartbreaking to leave my child to go to Australia to Study Research at Monash and to learn Quality Assurance Program at the Nepean University Hospital for 6 months and later to St Jude for 3 months. I missed my child terribly, but I knew she was well cared for. Till today, my child always state, "My grandmother brought me up." I am glad that my mom was alive and well in those days. I am ever grateful for her tender loving care for my daughter that she still holds dear to those memories. Her grandmother had stepped in to fill the gap I left. This is the meaning of extended family to give support and love when there is a gap. In later years, I am glad I was available to care for my aging mother, to clean and support her and to feed her. I am truly privileged to be able to have my mom during the days when my career was just beginning.

### On Balancing Career and Other Life Responsibilities

Life presents a tapestry for all. We, as nurses, admire the tapestry and we identify with its rich

images and stories; at the same time, do not fail to fit your unique self into that tapestry of life to bring about life changing work for patients, parents, families, and fellow nurses. The tapestry will show us where we fit in and will merge to be a part of our lives.

Always look for an opportunity to care because hard work polishes you into a gem.

# NOTES

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SIOP continues to be at the forefront of education and research in paediatric oncology.

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Established in 1969, the [International Society for Paediatric Oncology](#) is the only global multidisciplinary society entirely devoted to paediatric and adolescent cancers. With a steadily growing membership, SIOP currently unites over 3,000 healthcare professionals and researchers working with paediatric patients worldwide. The community shares a strong common purpose: to increase survival rates, to improve quality of survival and to ensure care for all.



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