

Hope Lives Here: NORA, Malaysia's National Breast Cancer Patient Navigation Programme, Celebrates 6 Years of Community Partnership in Care at Hospital Tuanku Ja'afar

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Malaysia's national breast cancer patient navigation programme, NORA (Navigation, Outreach and Resource Access), marks six years of partnership in care through its Community Partner Appreciation Luncheon, themed "Hope Lives Here," held at Hospital Tuanku Ja'afar.

The event honours a group of extraordinary yet often unseen individuals' community partners whose unwavering support has transformed the breast cancer journey for patients and families beyond hospital walls.

For six years, these partners have quietly stepped in where care is most needed, providing daily essentials, emotional support, and companionship during some of life's most difficult moments. Their role became even more critical during the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring continuity of care when access was limited, bringing not only necessities, but also reassurance, dignity, and hope.

At the heart of this work is NORA, Malaysia's national patient navigation programme for breast cancer, led by Cancer Research Malaysia in collaboration with the Ministry of Health Malaysia. NORA bridges clinical care with community-based support, ensuring that no patient has to navigate her journey alone.

At Hospital Tuanku Ja'afar, this national model is delivered through the Pink Ribbon Centre (PRC), a one-stop centre of care for women newly diagnosed with breast cancer. More than a physical space, the PRC serves as a compassionate and consistent point of support within the hospital, where clinical care is integrated with guidance, reassurance, and coordinated support.

A key element of this model is resource access, where the navigation team focuses on identifying and mobilising support. In building this network, the team recognises and leverages available resources, including people's time, in-kind contributions, and connections to both short-term and long-term financial support, easing the burden on patients and their families.

Through this approach, a Community Navigator builds and sustains a network of committed community partners, connecting patients to essential support such as financial assistance, transportation, daily living needs, and emotional care extending support meaningfully into patients lived realities. At Hospital Tuanku Ja'afar, this network has grown to more than 40 community partners.

In this milestone year, 15 community partners will be honoured with the Dot of Hope Award, recognising individuals whose quiet acts of service have brought comfort, dignity, and hope to patients and their families.

"Medicine alone is not enough to deliver outcomes," said Dr. Mazwela Mohamed, Lead, Breast Cancer Patient Navigation Programme, Hospital Tuanku Ja'afar.

"If we are serious about survival, then closing the gaps beyond the hospital must be a shared responsibility one that requires the strength of a community. It takes a village to bring someone through cancer, and every one of us, as Malaysians, has a role to play."

"There are many who want to help, but don't always know how," said Ms. Mallika Muniandy, Community Navigator, PRC HTJ. "This network provides a way for them to step in, to be part of a purposeful mission, and to support patients from wherever they are."

“Community partners give patients a sense of agency beyond clinical care,” added Aini Fatimah, Nurse Navigator, PRC HTJ. “As familiar and trusted faces, they influence how communities respond. Their word of mouth becomes a powerful bridge that encourages others to seek timely care and support.”

Together, this network represents a form of care that goes beyond systems and roles, where clinical excellence is strengthened by human compassion. As the programme looks ahead, the need remains clear many patients still face challenges beyond hospital care, and there is more work to be done.

NORA calls on individuals, organisations, and communities to step forward and be part of this growing network, because strengthening community partnership not only supports patients, but also strengthens the entire healthcare ecosystem.

At the Pink Ribbon Centre, hope is not just a message.
It is a shared responsibility.
A lived experience.

Hope lives here

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About Cancer Research Malaysia

Established in 2000, Cancer Research Malaysia (CRMV) is the country’s first and only independent and non-profit cancer research organisation. Funded entirely by donations and research grants, it conducts cancer research to find better ways to improve survival, focusing on Asians. In the breast cancer research programme, CRMV has led the first and most comprehensive study building a risk-stratified approach for screening in Asian women, which allows more efficient and equitable screening and prevention to Asian women at higher risk of breast cancer. In addition, CRMV has led the largest study of genomic profiles of Asian breast cancers, which provides critical insights into treatment and survival in Asian women. This has led directly to the development of the first investigator-led clinical trial to test new therapies in Asian breast cancer patients. Since 2014, CRMV has established a nurse and community-led programme which has transformed the survival of underserved Malaysian breast cancer patients.

For more information, please visit website at www.cancerresearch.my