“A good springboard for bringing out the best in every dental school and student”

An interview with Kime H. Cabalquinto, the Philippines, winner of DENTSPLY Asia’s 2011 Student Clinician Program competition in Singapore

Twenty-four-year-old Kime H. Cabalquinto is a dental student at the Centro Escolar University’s College of Dentistry in Malolos, the Philippines. As the first representative of her country, she won DENTSPLY’s Student Clinician Program (SCP) in Asia in 2011. Dental Tribune Asia Pacific had the opportunity to speak with her about the competition, dental education in the Philippines and her plans for the future.

DT Asia Pacific: Dear Ms Cabalquinto, as the winner of DENTSPLY’s Asia Pacific Student Clinician Program in 2011, you recently attended the American Dental Association meeting in San Francisco. How was the trip, and what were your experiences of the US and the event in general?

Kime Cabalquinto: I have been to the US several times before but I’ve never been to San Francisco, so I was really excited to visit the place, attend the American Dental Association convention and meet my fellow student clinicians from around the globe.

DENTSPLY was a great host, as always, making sure our needs were met and our expectations exceeded. I made some new friends and together we were able to exchange insights about a variety of subjects—from our research topics to the dental schools that we are from, and even our countries’ rich cultures.

Overall, it was a great and humbling experience. I felt so blessed to be chosen to represent Southeast Asia at the prestigious American Dental Association convention.

You won the 2011 DENTSPLY Asia SCP in Singapore with your presentation on okra mucilage extracts as an alternative to commonly used denture adhesives. Why did you choose this topic, and could you give us more details about your results?

While browsing the Internet for potential research topics, I came across some articles about lawsuits being filed against manufacturers of denture adhesives. Owing to the toxic effects of such adhesives, the complainants were reported to have paralysis of the upper and lower extremities that eventually leads to Bell’s palsy, all of which are due to using a substantial amount of denture adhesive per week.

We tested it on a variety of complete-denture patients in our clinic, and it yielded impressive results on a par with the commercially available ones.

Are you planning to develop this concept further?

We are taking it one step at a time and are currently working on improving the okra adhesive as a product. Despite this, we have already filed a patent at the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines in Taguig City.

Why did you apply for the SCP in the first place, and what do you think about the competition in general?

In my opinion, the SCP contest is a good springboard for bringing out the best in every dental school and student. We were not limited to certain topics, as the company allowed us to think out of the box, explore and go beyond our imagination. Yes, I have been aware of the recently concluded SCP in Hong Kong and I am happy to announce that the Philippine representative, who was from our school again, came in second place. If given another opportunity, I would be more than willing to participate in the competition again.

You were the first winner from the Philippines. How does the country currently rank with regard to dental education and research?

2011 was our school’s third entry in the SCP. We came in third place in Asia when we entered the contest for the first time. This motivated us to do even better in the following competitions. I honestly didn’t expect that we’d bag first prize. My competitors from other Asian countries had equally good or more advanced research. It was purely a blessing that we made it.

Centro Escolar University’s College of Dentistry has always been passionate about research and it is a good thing that our dean and professors are very encouraging and helpful, while pushing students to their limits. I wouldn’t have won in the first place were it not for enthusiasm and continuing support.

As far as dental education and research in the Philippines are concerned, I can truthfully say that we might not have the advancements in technology yet, but our country, and particularly my school, can still produce students and researchers that are recognized worldwide. It’s true that technology plays a big role in science and research, but sometimes it pays to go back to the basics: creativity and imagination. After all, the mind is the most powerful tool.

What are your plans for your professional future?

Right after I pass the dental board examinations, I intend to enrol for postgraduate courses abroad. I wish to be exposed to new techniques and innovations, especially as far as research is concerned. When I am finally equipped with the knowledge, I plan to go back home to the Philippines and share what I have, or will learn, with my colleagues and fellow students.

I want to be a source of encouragement to those who want to pursue research, let them know that all things are possible through hard work, the right motive and faith.

Thank you very much for the interview.