



CORAZON COLLANTES-JOSE, MD (1933-2025)

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IN REQUIEM, CORAZON COLLANTES-JOSE: MOTHER

“To lose a mother is like losing an arm...”

July 7, 2025. It was a quiet rainy evening, when the pitter-patter of the drops hitting the pavement and the smell of grass mixed with wet earth gave a sense of peace and rest, the ping of the phone became the harbinger of bad news. “It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of our beloved mother... Dr. Corazon Collantes-Jose...at the age of 92...” The first shock took a moment before I remembered that she had been hospitalized for some time then due to bronchopneumonia. But still, we were talking about a formidable lady who barreled through stereotyping, misogyny, criticisms of gigantic proportions and yet rose above magnificently triumphant- she should have been immortal.

“A mother was once a daughter, too...”

Corazon Collantes-Jose was hailed as the Mother of Cosmetic Surgery in the Philippines.

This one title compressed in bulk the story of an otolaryngologist’s making a path for the successful medical careers in cosmetic surgery of more than a thousand doctors in our country today. She graduated as a medical doctor from the University of Santo Tomas in the early 1950’s. This strong-willed lady resolutely went to the United States and did her internship again at Saint Elizabeth Hospital in New Jersey where she became chief intern. After passing the American Board of Medicine, she pursued her passion in Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery at the Queens Hospital Center, New York where she became chief resident in a white- and male- dominated field. In 1958, she became one of the few fellows of the very young Philippine Society of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery. She then decided to train in otology but was swayed off the path when she observed some cosmetic surgery procedures in the Manhattan Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital. She was witnessing the baby steps of the science and art of facial cosmetic surgery in America and she was hooked. Under the guidance of Dr. Jose L. Mathay, a pioneer in cosmetic surgery, she became a trailblazer in the field alongside Dr. Liboro L. Mangubat and Dr. Jaime S. Jorge.

“To be truly a mother, one should have children she raised and nurtured with love...”

It was not clear when she started taking in preceptees, but *Doktora Cora*, as she was fondly known in the medical world, mentored numerous surgical graduates, teaching them the art of cosmetic surgery. By 1972, alongside the country’s Father of Oculoplastic and



Cosmetic Surgery Dr. Burgos T. Sayoc, she founded the Philippine Society of Cosmetic Surgery (PSCS), an association of surgical fellows and diplomates who underwent two years of rigorous training in cosmetic surgery. The graduates went on to be well known and respected practitioners in the country. The said society is now one of the three strong pillars of the Philippine Federation of Cosmetic Surgery fighting for cosmetic surgery to be Professional Regulatory Commission-accredited as a stand-alone board-certified surgical specialty — a manifestation of her decades of legacy. She was also one of the first to practice liposuction with its co-inventors Dr. Giorgio Fischer and Dr. Pierre Fournier, and introduced this procedure locally and founded the Philippine Society of Liposuction Surgery, Inc. (PSLSI).

“To mother is to give your children wings...”

Dr. Collantes- Jose did not stop there. She had a vision for Filipino cosmetic surgery to be world class. And she took that challenge to another level. Through PSCS, she organized national conventions and congresses inviting world-renowned speakers to share their expertise. Dr. Fischer time and again graced the PSLSI conferences upon her invitation.

“A Filipina mother will never cease mothering her children even as they become parents themselves...”

I remember in our last PSCS convention in 2024, she texted me to remind me to attend the event, when I was part of the organizing committee. In March this year, she accepted an invitation from the PSCS board to speak online in the Induction and Turnover Ceremonies during the Annual General Assembly but had to decline at the last minute because she was ill. She never stopped mothering us, her “children,” even to the point of intervening in our internal indifferences, big or petty. She was our biggest “Maritess,” and she scolded us like a true *nanay* with commanding tones and resoluteness.

Doktora Corazon Collantes-Jose was one of the greatest lady doctors (with the likes of *Dra. Fe del Mundo*) of the Philippines. Trailblazer. Innovator. Teacher. Mother.

I am so proud to be a witness to her greatness. I am proud that she was also an Otolaryngologist- Head and Neck Surgeon, a title she never removed from her profession. I will always remember that I was a recipient of her firm yet loving mothering.

Philippine Cosmetic Surgery is Corazon Collantes-Jose, MD, FPSCS, FPSOHN.