

# Ex-barber's cream fights skin cancer

by MIKO L. MORELOS  
Inquirer.net

DeWart, DeMole and now—de-cancer. By reformulating his amazing cream that gets rid of warts and moles without surgery, Rolando dela Cruz, 71, came up with DeBCC that combats skin cancer.

Doctors from Philippine General Hospital (PGH) have already certified the DeBCC cream as a viable treatment for basal cell carcinoma (BCC), the most common type of skin cancer.

On Nov. 21, Dela Cruz received the World Intellectual Property Office gold medal for DeBCC as an outstanding invention during the closing ceremonies of the National Inventors Week.

When he was a child, Dela Cruz asked his mother why his hands got burnt when he cut a raw cashew nut he found in their backyard.

"I was trying to open the raw cashew nut by striking it with a stone. The oil from the nut splattered on my hands and some areas of my hands got burnt," he recounted.

## It started with a nut

Dela Cruz would often refer to this story as how the idea for his invention started.

He was able to formulate a cream to remove warts and moles on the skin and later, a painless treatment for the most common type of skin cancer, which the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) recently hailed as the outstanding invention of the year.

A former barber in Caloocan City, Dela Cruz recalled seeing scars on the faces and necks of his clients, and would ask them about the scars.

"I compared my experience of getting burnt from cashew nut oil to the scars of my clients who had their warts cauterized," he told the Philippine Daily Inquirer on the sidelines of the closing ceremonies of the National Inventors Week on last Nov. 21.

"I asked them about the cauterizing machine. I had no idea what it was because I was only in second year high school," he added.

## Making the connection

The cauterizing machine and the cashew nut oil seemed to have the same effect, he figured. Using extract from the cashew nut, he removed the warts and moles of his clients at the barber shop.

In 1997, Dela Cruz and his family started marketing the products as DeWart, a cream to remove warts, and DeMole, a cream to remove moles, his son Rommel de la Cruz said.

In a separate interview, the younger Dela Cruz narrated how they joined an exhibit at the Greenhills Commercial Center in San Juan.

"[At the beginning] we didn't even know how we would pay for the rent of the stall," he said. "But in that exhibit, we learned how to price our products and how to sell them. It was a valuable experience."

DeMole and DeWart were later recognized by

the DOST, with the creams winning the Tuklas award in 1998.

Doctors also deemed the creams as possible treatment for warts and moles after completing clinical trials and studies on patients, he added.

Then an odd thing happened.

"Patients diagnosed with basal cell carcinoma insisted on trying the DeMole treatment. They even signed a waiver (absolving us from responsibility) so they could apply the cream to their BCC," the younger Dela Cruz said.

He and the staff charted the results and said the treatment "had a good, albeit, small effect on the growths."

"In 2003, Tatay reformulated DeMole by adding other ingredients and increased the strength of the cashew extract. We called the cream DeBCC," the younger Dela Cruz said.

## Sensitive areas

According to the US-based Skin Cancer Foundation, skin cancer is the most common kind of cancer in the United States with over a million cases reported annually. One in five Americans could develop the disease, the foundation said.

Surgery, chemotherapy and radiation are the usual treatments offered to BCC patients, but doctors encounter difficulties removing growths in sensitive areas like the face and genitalia.

Dela Cruz's cream made the removal of BCC easier. A clinical trial at PGH validated the viability of the treatment.

It was documented in the study, "Anacardium Occidentale (Linn. Cashew Nut Extract; DeBCC ©) in the Treatment of Basal Cell Carcinoma or Skin Cancer" by University of the Philippines doctors Eric Talens, Orlando Ocampo, Daniel dela Paz, Horacio Estrada and Porfirio Tica.

The amazing DeBCC cream was also chosen as one of 11 "Posters of Exceptional Merit" last year during the 93rd Annual Congress of the American College of Surgeons held in New Orleans, Louisiana.

## Sleeping in La Loma

Despite his success as an inventor, Dela Cruz has never forgotten his humble beginnings. Poverty has made him a stronger person, he said.

"Those were trying times. I even experienced living in La Loma cemetery, sleeping in a cold, open *nitso* (tomb)," he said. During those nights, he dreamed of becoming a doctor.

"And even though I never had a chance to take up medicine, my inventions allowed me to team up with doctors and find treatments," Dela Cruz said. ■

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