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Mary Cons T. Dugay, MD (1973-2026)

Gina T. Rosimo, MD



Anyone who met Mary Cons T. Dugay—Cons to many—remembers how readily she started a conversation. She had a rare gift for making people feel welcome: a stranger could become a friend in minutes, and colleagues who met her only once at a convention remembered her for years. Her warmth, humor and lively presence brought people together wherever she went.

A native of Roxas, Isabela, Cons was the eighth of 10 children. She excelled at the University of La Salette, graduating as salutatorian in 1990. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Medical Technology in 1994 and her medical degree in 1998, both from the University of Santo Tomas (UST), and completed her internship at the University of Santo Tomas Hospital (USTH). While at UST, she was a member of the Sigma Tau Delta Sorority.

After passing the Physician Licensure Examination, Cons worked as a moonlighting physician at Callang General Hospital in Santiago City and later served at a government hospital in San Antonio, Ilagan.

We first met while she was moonlighting at Callang General Hospital. At the time, she saw me responding to emergency room calls late in my pregnancy. She thought it was cool and became interested in the field. A few months later, I lost track of her. I didn't know that she had begun residency training in Otorhinolaryngology and Head and Neck Surgery at the USTH. Five years later, she returned to Isabela as a full-fledged Otolaryngologist herself and established her practice.

Cons became a committed member of the Philippine Society of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery and was a familiar, welcome presence at its annual and midyear conventions and chapter gatherings.

Travel was one of Cons's enduring joys. It began during residency, when surgical missions took her to places including Siargao, then still quiet and little known, and Pampanga. She continued exploring with her family, her son, Gelo, and often on her own. When family and friends could not join her, she shared photographs so they could travel with her in spirit. Even when her health made her more aware of time, she chose to keep going and see more of the world.

Growing up, Cons spoke of her struggle with the 'bulge.' Later in life, she discovered the joy of running—and the sense of achievement that came with reaching a goal she had long hoped for. When her knees no longer allowed her to run, she found another way to move and took up dancing. She was spirited and unmistakably herself: endlessly talkative, playful, and known for panic-buying at outlet stores and packing toiletries in full-size containers—sometimes leaving her luggage over the weight limit.

Above all, Cons was a devoted daughter and sister. She stayed in Roxas with her parents while her siblings settled elsewhere or started families of their own. When her parents could no longer run their store, she turned it into a clinic and supported them. After her father died in 2013, she remained closely devoted to her mother.

When Gelo came along, Cons became a loving and supportive mother. She devoted herself to caring for him, even when he attended school far from home, and encouraged him in the path he hoped to pursue in college.

To her youngest brother, Cons was a generous sister and a guiding example. She lent him her car when he needed it and encouraged his own path into medicine. After an especially exhausting clerkship duty, he called her, unsure whether he could continue. Cons answered, "I told you so. But you can do it. You're almost there." Those words stayed with him. Cons had helped him see that becoming a doctor was possible.

Mary Cons T. Dugay will be remembered for the care she gave her family and patients, the friendships she made so easily, and the life she embraced with humor, generosity, and curiosity. She was a beloved daughter, sister, mother, physician, colleague, and friend—and an inspiration whose encouragement lives on in those she touched.

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