Natividad Relucio-Clavano

Pediatrician and breastfeeding pioneer

Health campaigners around the globe are mourning the death, at the age of 73, of Dr Natividad Relucio-Clavano, the Filipino paediatrician whose research demonstrated the damaging impact that western medical practices have on breastfeeding and infant feeding.

Dr Clavano was born in Manila, the capital of the Philippines, and graduated in medicine from the University of Santo Tomas in 1957. Seventy years later, her life took a dramatic twist when she came to London for postgraduate paediatric studies at the Institute of Child Health, London University. Initially keen to learn about antenatal care, she attended lectures on breastfeeding and was struck by its simplicity and the need to feed babies regularly.

Dr Clavano returned home armed with hopeful information about how to change hospitals and health systems. She said that the best way to address the issue was by training nurses and ending policies that discouraged breastfeeding.

In 1976, she founded the International Board for Breastfeeding, which aims to promote breastfeeding and its benefits.

Dr Clavano's research demonstrated the importance of breastfeeding for the health and well-being of both mothers and babies, and she helped to develop guidelines for breastfeeding policies.

Dr Clavano's legacy continues to inspire breastfeeding advocates around the world, and her work has helped to improve breastfeeding rates in the Philippines and beyond.

"Joan's shown the way, and now it's our turn to follow her example," said one of her former students.

"She was a true pioneer in the field of breastfeeding," said another.

Dr Clavano died on November 14, 2007, leaving behind a legacy of love and dedication to the health and well-being of the world's children.

The Guardian | Thursday November 14, 2007

Dr. Clavano was a pioneer in the field of breastfeeding, and her work has helped to improve breastfeeding rates in the Philippines and beyond. Her legacy continues to inspire breastfeeding advocates around the world.