



Onco-Image: When Image Consulting and Medicine Are a Good Match

by Aury D. Caltagirone, AICI CIP

Meet AICI's first Image Consultant to work for a full-time salary in a cancer institute, in France. Aury immigrated to France 20 years ago and this is her story, in her own words...

My nickname is "Aury", and I have thus chosen Aury D. Caltagirone as my professional name. I currently work as a Personal Image Consultant and Socio-Beautician CODES in France, at the Institut de Cancerologie Gustave Roussy (IGR, a leading center in Europe for cancer treatment). My job was created in 2003 at the initiative of IGR's Executive Director, as part of his "Science and Humanity" plan.

After passing the official State certificate for Beautician Cosmetician in 1991, I started volunteering in a hospital through the association "Les Dames en rose" that rallies for the well-being improvement of people suffering from a severe illness.

In parallel I became an independent worker as a Beautician in 1993, and worked primarily for the Cosmetic Executive Women association (CEW). I have been able to strengthen my approach of the job by working in several other hospitals specialized in various fields such as geriatrics, psychiatry, palliative care and cancer treatment.

The common point between the patients of these various medical institutions is that ***they are devastated by the numerous physical changes brought up by the illness, such as hair loss, loss of a member or significant weight changes.*** They were strongly requesting support for compensating these changes during their treatment. After realizing the situation, I became interested in Image Consulting, first through reading the available books, then by attending several trainings, in order to understand the subject more deeply and be in position to adapt it to the hospitals.

Consequently, I have been able to propose and practice since 1994 at IGR this innovative adaptation of Image Consulting to severely ill people.

My Mexican roots made me believe that **beauty encompasses both well-being and appearance**, and it was thus very natural for me to sustain the two aspects in order to take better care of the ill person.

This mixed approach “Personal Image Consulting” / “Esthetics-Cosmetics” is perfectly in line with the “humanization” of the care to the patients, from the curative phase to the palliative phase.

In the year 2000, I have extended my field of competence and I have performed several trainings in Professional Image Consulting at various “Employment Clubs”. I have been able to explain to some young unemployed men and women the correct ways to dress and behave in order to succeed in the business world.

In 2003, wanting to improve my practice, I have followed the Socio-Esthetics CODES training at the Medical Faculty in Tours (France). The courses were quite medically oriented, in order to adapt the Esthetics to the well-being of people diminished in their physical, mental or social integrity.

After performing several application trainings in some hospitals and passing the final exam, I have received my Socio-Esthetics CODES diploma with honors.

With the excellent feedbacks that I received from patients, I am today grounded to say that coupling “Socio-Esthetics” and “Image Consulting”, through individual or group sessions, is a very efficient method for the patients to reconcile themselves with their body and come back to a successful social life.

I have learned a great deal from this job in a hospital, both in the human and professional fields, with a direct link to the patients. It requires a personal approach of the patients, tuned to everyone, and with a dedicated speech.

It is a real and constant challenge that motivates me quite a lot, so as to motivate other Personal Image Consultants or Socio-Beautician professionals to launch out themselves in this mixed service for the benefit of the patients.

Email Aury Caltagirone, AICI CIP at Aury.CALTAGIRONE@igr.fr