

## Nelia Laroza, October 1951 to June 2003

On June 29, 2003, RN Nelia Laroza lost her battle with SARS, becoming the first Canadian nurse to die from the disease.

Educated as a nurse at St. Jude College in Manila, the Philippines, Laroza and her husband emigrated to Canada in 1978. Laroza started working at Toronto's Riverdale Hospital (RH), now Bridgepoint Health, in 1981. After completing her Canadian nursing certification at Seneca College, she made the transition to practicing as a registered nurse in RH's 3 West unit in 1986.

Five years later, Laroza joined North York General Hospital's (NYGH) orthopedic unit as a full-time RN. It is believed she contracted SARS from an elderly patient in mid-May, before the second SARS outbreak. While working full-time at NYGH, Laroza maintained her part-time position at Bridgepoint Health until the time of her illness and death.

Hundreds of Laroza's colleagues attended her funeral at St. Michael's cathedral on July 4 to pay their respects. RNAO president Adeline Falk-Rafael and officials from the Ontario Nurses Association (ONA), the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) and the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) were also among the mourners, as were Premier Ernie Eves, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care Tony Clement, Municipal Affairs Minister David Young, Deputy Mayor of Toronto Case Ootes, and Commissioner of Public Safety Dr. James Young.

Laroza is survived by her husband and two children, Grace and Kenneth.

“Like police officers and fire fighters, nurses have endlessly given of themselves to protect the community from SARS. Our hearts go out to the families, colleagues and friends of these two brave nurses, and to everyone who has suffered because of SARS.”

*Doris Grinspun, RN, PhD (Cand.)  
Executive Director, RNAO*

“The dedication of both Nelia and Tecla highlights the commitment all nurses have to their patients day after day, regardless of the dangers. They truly are heroes. That is how we must remember them.”

*Adeline Falk-Rafael, RN, PhD  
President, RNAO*



“Her death brought into focus the sacrifices nurses make.”

**Karen Ellacott, RN  
Cared for Nelia Laroza in  
NYGH SARS Unit**

“She was a very dependable person. She was a good friend and very loving, caring and sweet. It's so unbelievable that she didn't get better, it's so sad. We will really miss her.”

**Juji Menez  
RN, North York General Hospital  
Colleague of Nelia Laroza for  
10 years Currently recovering  
from SARS**

“Our mother was a perfect example of how God only takes the very best. She was a wonderful woman. Responsible, kindhearted, down to earth, loud and playful. We are everything we are because of her and will do whatever we can to continue her legacy.”

**Grace Laroza**

“The image of her coffin processing through an honour aisle of nurses, one hand on their hearts and the other in salute, is an evocative image of the nursing teamwork embodied by Nelia and her colleagues.”

**Mary Gavan,  
RN, MA**

“She was a very caring, gentle soul.”

**Deborah Watson,  
RN Worked with Laroza for 10 years**

## Tecla Lin, December 1944 to July 2003

The following song was written and performed by RNAO member and ONA vice president Marcia Taylor at the funeral of Tecla Lin on July 29 in Toronto.

### *In Your Honour*

*In recognition of service, we honour you this way  
We value your commitment, more than words could say  
For all that you've done, each battle won  
Fighting for the right, challenging the wrong*

*Raise your head high  
Feel a sense of pride  
Honour to you, for all that you have done*

*For each and every time you made the sacrifice  
To make a difference for others and never compromise  
Pride before shame, service not fame  
Courage and honour, without you not the same*

*Raise your head high  
Feel a sense of pride  
Honour to you, for all that you have done*

After a lengthy battle with SARS, Tecla Lin passed away on the 19th of July, 2003, at William Osler Health Centre in Etobicoke. Lin, 58, became the second RN in Canada to die from the disease after contracting it while caring for SARS patients at West Park Healthcare Centre (WPHC).

Lin, a registered nurse for more than 35 years, practiced nursing in both Canada and in her native Hong Kong. She was one of the first nurses in Ontario to step forward in the battle against SARS, caring for 14 health-care professionals stricken with the disease while working at the Grace site of The Scarborough Hospital (TSH). The ill TSH staff were transferred to WPHC's interim SARS unit on R4 during the first outbreak, where it is believed Lin contracted the disease in March. Lin's husband also passed away from SARS in April.

Born in Hong Kong and educated at the Government School of Nursing in Kowloon, Hong Kong, Lin began her nursing career in 1968. She and her family emigrated to Canada in 1973.

Lin worked part-time at WPHC and part-time at the Toronto Rehab Hospital. Prior to that, Lin worked at the Doctors Hospital in Toronto from 1977 to 1998, where she specialized in monitoring intensive and critical care unit patients. She supplemented her education at Ryerson Polytechnic University by earning a Bachelor of Applied Arts in Nursing and a Certificate in Critical Care Nursing.

Tecla Lin is survived by sons Wilson and Michael Tang, her mother, a sister and two brothers in Hong Kong.



"As colleagues of Tecla's at Doctors Hospital, we grew to know, understand, respect and admire Tecla. She was a determined woman. This made Tecla an excellent patient advocate and strong team member. She gave of herself wholeheartedly as a nurse, as a friend, as a mother. She continually awed us with her zeal for living life to its fullest. Her energy was refreshing and contagious."  
**Tecla's colleagues in ICU, ACU and all the other areas of Doctors Hospital**

"I was very touched by Tecla's colleagues. Each and every one of them remembers her as a caring, generous and thoughtful person. To me, this spoke volumes of who she was both as a nurse and as a person."  
**Anne-Marie Malek, Vice President, Programs and Chief Nursing Executive, West Park Healthcare**

"I am a nursing student one year away from graduation and Tecla is now another reason that I am becoming a nurse. It is her work ethic and her conviction to her craft that will continue to inspire generations of nursing students like myself. I can't tell you how proud I was to be in nursing when the news of the SARS crisis hit the papers. At a time when travellers were canceling trips to Toronto, and people were masking themselves in public areas, it was nurses who led the fight at the frontlines and stood by their patients even in the face of danger. It is that kind of selflessness that reminds me there is no other profession like nursing."

**Jodi Tomlinson**  
4th year nursing student,  
York University, Toronto

"Tecla exemplified the true meaning of dedication and hard work with a lifelong career of nursing. Her kindness, smile and generosity will always be remembered. Tecla, rest in peace."

**Idalia Innis, RN,**  
West Park Healthcare Centre

"She was a very generous, compassionate human being with a very unique zest for life. She was also a very well respected clinician, and a wonderful person. I am so blessed to have known someone like her."

**Kim Chow**  
Former colleague (at Doctors Hospital), Toronto