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# Cansurvive reaches out on Leukemia Day

CANSURVIVE, the Egyptian organisation for supporting cancer patients, celebrated World Leukemia Day on September 22 in an innovative manner this year.

Cansurvive illuminated the Grand Pyramid, the symbol of the oldest civilisation, with an orange light. The aim was to deliver the message that Egypt reached out to everybody in the world for co-operation in resisting this dangerous disease, which affects between one and two people in every 100,000 around the world.

During the event, the results of a survey of Egyptians' general perceptions about leukemia was announced, the organisers told *The Egyptian Gazette*.

Orange was selected for the colour of the light to illuminate the pyramid because it is the colour used in awareness campaigns for this chronic disease.

Leukemia happens when the Philadelphia chromosome is formed as a result of a genetic abnormality in chromosome 9 of chromosome 22. This is why 9/22 was selected as the day to highlight the dangers of this disease every year.

Cansurvive emphasised that the need to provide all types of support, especially psychological and moral support, to patients from all social classes.

The organisation also calls for integrating patients into society and turning them



**DR Mervat Matar (R)** stresses during a conference held in Cairo that target therapies to treat cancer have become available through health insurance.

into effective partners in social development, by providing the required medical care.

Success stories abound about people who fought cancer in general and leukemia in particular. These stories need to be told. Their heroes and heroines must also be integrated into society without discrimination.

Survey findings showed that 53 per cent of respondents said they had no idea about

the different types of leukemia, while 47.5 per cent said they did not know that the disease could be controlled with medicines.

Some 32.6 per cent of the interviewees said patients can live with the disease between one and five years and 56 per cent said the disease affected the patients' ability to work by 50 to 70 per cent. Some 2,775 people took part in the survey.

The event included organising a confer-

ence attended by professors of haematology to focus on the latest developments in treatment.

Leukemia has an incidence rate of 1.5/100,000 every year. Chronic Myeloid Leukemia (CML) patients represents 15 per cent of all mature leukemia patients.

A haematology professor at the National Cancer Institute, Dr Hossam Kamel, said CML treatment had seen a major breakthrough during the last 50 years, contributing to turning this disease from one that can only be treated through bone marrow transplants to one that can be treated by targeted therapy.

Dr. Kamel said the emergence of another generation of targeted therapies had raised recovery rates in an unprecedented manner.

Dr. Mervat Matar, a haematology professor at Kasr al-Aini Hospital, said that studies had proved that the therapies also contributed to making 90 per cent of patients live longer and also put them on a path of continual improvement without hospitalisation.

"These medicines are available in Egypt now," Dr. Matar said, noting that Egyptian patients who have health insurance can get them, while the government offers the same medicines free of charge for patients unable to afford them.



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