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Cairo hosts 1st conference of PMF patients

PRIMARY myelofibrosis (PMF) is a rare and dangerous disease. It is a bone marrow cancer which was the subject of the first international conference of patients with PMF held in Cairo recently. The conference was organised by the Egyptian Society of Haematology and was aimed at raising the awareness of patients and their families about the disorder and how to cure it. PMF affects one out of every 100,000 people, between 50 and 60 years of age, worldwide, while in Egypt it affects people between 20 and 30 years of age.

The conference, which was attended by a large number of haematologists, launched an awareness campaign through "NEDAA", an organisation which looks after patients affected with PMF. According to Dr Mervat Mattar, Professor of Haematology at the Kasr el-Aini Medical School, PMF is a killer disease unless it is diagnosed and treated correctly.

She said she regretted that there was a lack of knowledge about such a serious disease, not only in Egypt but also in the Middle East as a whole. This meant that both physicians and patients had a major challenge to overcome before

they could reach a correct diagnosis and begin proper treatment.

Dr Matter pointed out that the conference highlighted several treatment options to cure PMF and to allow patients to lead a normal life. She said that without the treatment, one third of PMF cases developed severe blood and bone marrow cancer.

She added that PMF caused bone marrow not to produce enough blood cells, which in turn caused enlargement of the spleen, anemia and a shortage of white blood cells and platelets.

This gave rise to the following symptoms: fatigue, pain in the abdomen, muscles and bones and quickly feeling full after eating, with resultant weight loss. Dr Fathi Khoudair, Dean of the Kasr El-Aini School of Medicine, said that the Medical School had done its best to help make a success of the conference.

Dr Khaled Makin, Deputy Dean of the Medical School, called on the media to raise the people's awareness of PMF and he urged non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to contribute to the funding of research and studies to improve the chances of reaching a cor-



Dr Mervat Mattar

rect diagnosis and providing the right treatment.

Danger of arteriosclerosis

Dr Sahar Nassef Professor of Internal Diseases at the Kasr El-Aini Medical School delivered a lecture to raise awareness of the danger of arteriosclerosis. She noted that there were factors that could be controlled and others that could not.

Age and family history could not be controlled; while high lipid levels and smoking could. People who smoke two packets of cigarettes a day are nine times more likely to develop arteriosclerosis than non-smokers. It is best to avoid using a lot of sugar and salt, (the white poisons), in food and drink. Dr Nassef recommended doing exercise, such as jogging for half an hour every day. She advised drinking a lot of water, both winter and summer, to maintain healthy blood vessels.