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Support for blood cancer patients

A gathering in support of blood cancer – myeloproliferative neoplasm (MPN) (Myeloproliferative neoplasms are a group of diseases in which the bone marrow makes too many red blood cells, white blood cells, or platelets.) – patients, entitled, “Know your condition MPN10,” was held recently by Cairo University Hospital and the Neoplasm Don’t Alarm (NEDA) patient group affiliated to the Egyptian Society of Haematology and Research (ESHR).

The event included medical seminars for both patients and doctors and shed light on this rare blood disease, raising awareness of patients, families and caregivers of the treatment options.

“I am very happy to host this event for the second time in this regional bastion”, said Dr Fathy Khodeir, the Dean of the School of medicine, Cairo University. “It reflects the school’s tireless efforts to serve MPN patients, enabling them to receive the latest therapies available”.

Dr Khaled Makeen, of the school medicine, Cairo University, stressed the importance of cooperation between international organi-



Dr Mervat Matter

sations and medical associations to raise awareness of MPN and its treatment. “Early detection means a swift start to treatment which can inhibit the progress of the disease, allowing patients to resume their normal lives.”

The second educational seminar for MPN patients was held under the auspices of the Department of Internal Medicine headed by Dr Ali Jaballah and the Kasr el-Ainy Haematology Unit, led by Dr Zakaria Ismail.

The symposium discussed MPN patient evaluation methods and symptom follow-up as well as

increases in red blood cells and platelet counts before and after treatment, to determine the stage of the disease and the patient’s health status.

Haematology professors of Cairo and Ain Shams universities reviewed individual patient cases and ongoing communication between professors and rare disease specialists. Dr Mervat Matter, Haematology Professor at Cairo University, said:

“Patients from across Egypt can obtain information on their condition without the financial, physical and psychological burdens associated with travelling to Cairo for medical counsel. This event is vital because of the shortage of rare disease specialists. It helps educate and train doctors on the latest developments in the diagnosis and treatment of such diseases, adding additional communication channels, such as social media to benefit patients and the medical community as whole.”

“MPN and polycythaemia vera (a bone marrow disease) are acquired diseases, non-hereditary that pose a serious risk to the lives of patients,” said Dr Hanan Hamid, Professor of Haematology, Ain Shams

University. “The difficulty and delay in diagnosis are two main obstacles facing the treatment of prevalent diseases such as schistosomiasis (bilharzia) and hepatitis C virus stem from an overlap in symptoms which include enlargement of the spleen, fatigue, abdominal pain or pain under the ribs as well as muscle, bone aches and rapid weight loss. All this means that the disease is usually diagnosed at an advanced stage.”

Dr Ahmed Ahmed Abdul Hamid, Consultant in Haematology, Cairo University, said: “We aim to minimise diagnostic inaccuracies that result from patients mostly turning to internal medicine practitioners, which delays the correct diagnosis by a year or two. An accurate and timely diagnosis can help patients begin treatment immediately, halting disease development”.

Dr Doaa el Demerdash, Professor of Haematology, Cairo University, said that therapeutic element in MPN treatment was available until recently when the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the use of the first of its kind treatment Ruxolitinib. This treatment transforms disease – causing cells into normal cells.