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New hope for leukemia patients

THE Chronic Myeloid Leukemia (CML) Association celebrated World Leukemia Day on September 22. The day was chosen globally to provide support for patients with CML, which is caused by a chromosome produced by a defect in chromosome No.9 and chromosome No.22. This year, the aim of the event is for doctors and patients with leukemia to meet and to make their voices heard by the decision-makers.

Dr Mervat Matter, Professor of Hematology at Cairo University, noted that patients with chronic leukemia have been suffering from a shortage of effective medicines up to the year 2000 and bone-marrow transplant operations were the only option for them, despite their low success rate. This increased the mortality rate among patients.

The new therapies that have emerged have given patients hope that they can be treated. The second generation of these medicines are considered to be a turning point in the treatment of leukemia, said Dr Matter. Studies have proved that the second-generation drugs have increased the survival rate of patients to 90 per cent.

The drugs have helped turn CML into a disease that can be cured, after it was classified as one of the serious diseases. Furthermore, patients with CML who are continuously responsive to the treatment over a long period of time can, for the first time, stop the treatment, under the supervision of a doctor. This is evidence of the effectiveness of the new therapies.

Ahmed Awad, founder of the CML Association, said: "One of the association's goals is to raise the patients' awareness of their disease. This is the first association for patients with leukemia in Egypt.

It was established in 2014, with the help of the Egyptian Society of Cancer Patients. The people attending the World Leukemia Day event recommended the setting up of a unit to support patients with leukemia psychologically.



Dr Mervat Matter