

PRESS CLIPPING SHEET

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The Breast Cancer Foundation of Egypt (BCFE) and Novartis hosted My Story Is Not Over, Count Me, a forum that is part of the Unmute the Silence initiative, the first of its kind in the Middle East to shed light on metastatic breast cancer, provide psychological support for patients, and discuss treatment advances.

The forum provided an overview of metastatic breast cancer as well as the efforts to raise awareness of the disease and the role of complementary therapies in improving patients' psychological wellbeing. Since its inception in January 2016, Unmute the Silence has served as a platform for societal, professional, and scientific efforts to address the challenges faced by metastatic breast cancer patients.

Prof. Mohamed Shaalan, Professor of Surgical Oncology and Head of the Breast Surgery Department at the National Cancer Institute (NCI), and BCFE Founder said, "By launching the first Arabic-language platform for metastatic breast cancer, we've addressed the lack of accessible information on the illness, latest treatments, advances in testing and diagnosis, as well as the psychological issues faced by patients and caregivers."

"We extend our appreciation to Novartis Pharma, in recognition of the dynamic collaboration we have with the leading healthcare player, whom we are happy to have on board as a strategic partner," added Shaalan. "In addition to its definitive role in developing new treatments, Novartis is committed to supporting patients. This forum comes on the back of "Count Me" survey – which Novartis carried out in 2018 –supporting BCFE's efforts to inspire metastatic breast cancer patients with hope and determination, enabling them to uncover a new meaning and purpose to life by giving back.

Attended by oncologists, journalists, and public figures, the forum began by showcasing a video on metastatic breast cancer, which means the detection of breast cancer at an advanced stage, when cancer cells have spread to other parts of the body. The video revealed a drop in patients' survival chances once the cancer has metastasized and showed the psychological and physical impact endured by women faced with such a diagnosis.

Ghada Khalafallah, BCFE Director of Communications and the initiative coordinator said, "The forum addresses the unmet needs of metastatic breast cancer patients and bridges the gap

between their therapeutic and psychosocial needs and the real-life experience of living with the disease. It also introduces complementary treatment options that can be effective in managing the disease." She also spoke about the art gallery organized by university students alongside the forum, featuring paintings that encapsulate and express the emotions and dreams of metastatic breast cancer patients.

The interactive forum gave voice to 120 patients and their families, encouraging them to share their journey. One patient expressed hopes of drawing public attention to the psychological and physical suffering experienced by breast cancer patients, others have said, "a smile, a song, and a kind word help us fight back. As long as my heart beats, I will never give up," and "Life isn't measured by the number of years we live, but by the life in these years – every single moment counts."

Shaalan noted that living with metastatic breast cancer involves neglected aspects, the most important of which are how to communicate with the attending physician, understand the condition and discuss treatment options. They also include therapeutic nutrition that can improve the efficacy of pharmaceutical therapies. He also emphasized psychological support to patients and caregivers as an essential element of the treatment journey.

The "Count Me" survey revealed that two-thirds of Egyptian women with advanced breast cancer say they generally feel like no one understands what they are going through. The survey also highlighted another significant gap: A very small percentage of women discuss their emotional status with their doctors, although most would like to do so. In addition, almost 60% of patients find it difficult to obtain information on advanced breast cancer as they often search for information online before asking their physician.

Together with metastatic breast cancer patients, their families and caregivers, the forum was attended by renowned experts including, Prof. Maha Saber, Head of the Complementary Medicine Department at the National Research Center and a consultant of clinical nutrition for oncology patients, Prof. Amr Shafik, Professor of Oncology at Ain Shams University, Dr. Iman Sherb, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Ain Shams University, and laughter yoga instructor Ute Devika.