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# Defeating cancer with mental health

A CLINIC to provide free psychological support for cancer patients has recently opened at Baheya Hospital in Giza Governorate in collaboration with the psychological and social support unit for the Red Crescent and one of the major foreign pharmaceutical companies.

At a ceremony held recently to honour the clinic's 20 volunteers, who completed a training programme that began last April, the Director of Baheya Hospital, Dr Amr Abu Thoraya, noted that improving patients' psychological condition contributes immensely to raising cure rates for cancer, and that a patient's will to heal is the main factor that spurs their immune system to fight the disease.

The clinic will offer a programme that includes psychological support sessions in addition to entertainment activities to improve patients' moral. Furthermore, training courses are being held to prepare new specialists, to ensure that they are able to help motivate cancer patients to start treatment without hesitation or fear.

Dr Abu Thoraya noted that recent stud-

ies have recommend psychological care as a part of the treatment protocols, in parallel with medical care, in order to alleviate psychological suffering experienced by patients with cancer.

Dr Moemena Kamel, Egyptian Red Crescent Secretary General, used breast cancer as a specific example of how the mindset of patients can affect treatment outcomes.

"Breast cancer patients often refuse to begin treatment, feeling depressed, convinced that there is no effective treatment and that their illness will inevitably result in death. In reality, cure rates for breast cancer now reach 99 per cent if discovered early and treated immediately, so it is vital that this information is shared with patients in a simplified manner to encourage them to commence and adhere to treatment," she said. For his part, Dr Ahmed Hassan, Head of the Oncology Department at Baheya Hospital, pointed out that psychological support limits mortality rates to 50 per cent, but that mortality rates reach 30 per cent among cancer



**DR AMR Abu thoraya (middle) standing between volunteers from the Psychological Support Clinic recently opened at Baheya Hospital.**

patients affected with depression. These findings, he said, have encouraged Baheya Hospital and its programme partners to transform psychological support into an integral element of comprehensive treatment strategies. He added that breast

cancer affects one out of eight women in Egypt. Notably, some Baheya Hospital staff are cancer survivors themselves, who were treated at the hospital and have been now become support specialists helping other patients, Dr Abdel Aziz said.