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Hand in hand against cancer

THE "Hand in Hand" initiative was launched by a conference on tumours held in Cairo recently. Its aim is to stress the importance of co-operation between the community and the government in the fight against cancer, in the light of the high incidence rate of cancer in Egypt.

The conference discussed second generation, breakthrough therapies and the best ways of treating breast cancer and chronic myeloid leukaemia, which are the types of cancer with the highest incidence rate, locally.

According to Dr Hussein Khaled, Professor of Oncology, at Cairo University, cancer is a global problem and is considered the second most common cause of death after cardiovascular disease.

"Recent data issued by Egypt's

National Cancer Registry showed that 113 new cases of cancer are diagnosed per 100,000 people, annually," said Dr Khaled.

The data revealed that liver cancer is the most common kind in men, with 39 cases per 100,000 reported every year. For women, breast cancer is the major enemy, with an average 35 new cases reported for every 100,000 patients.

The Ministry's High Commission on Cancer has drawn up a plan to fight cancer that is based on five points, according to Dr Khaled.

"The first point is prevention and early detection, the second is diagnosis and treatment, the third is the training of medical staff: doctors, nurses, and technicians, the fourth is scientific research and the fifth is supporting the National Cancer Registry," said Dr Khaled. He

stressed the importance of drawing up guidelines and protocols in the field of cancer treatment in Egypt.

For his part Dr Hamdi Abdel Azim, also a Professor of Oncology at Cairo University, emphasised the importance of co-operation between doctors, pharmaceutical firms, NGOs and the whole health sector to counter the elevated incidence rates of cancer, so as to achieve the recovery rates recorded by developed countries.

"Over the past two decades, the recovery rates for cancer have risen from 50 to 65 per cent, due to early detection and a remarkable improvement in the various treatment techniques," said Dr Abdel Azim. He confirmed that pharmaceutical firms all over the world had an important role to play in eliminating the suffering of can-

cer patients and reducing the economic burdens shouldered by patients and governments alike.

Dr Abdel Azim emphasised the role that should be played by NGOs in supporting patients through the "Hand in Hand" initiative and he said there was a need to establish an organisation to co-ordinate the efforts of the parties tackling the cancer problem. The parties are: the Ministry of Health, the specialists treating the disease, the media, the Egyptian Cancer Society, which draws up guidelines and treatment protocols, and the pharmaceutical companies.

Dr Abdel Azim said, "If all the other parties work together, they could pressure the pharmaceutical companies into reducing the price of the cancer drugs. This would contribute to increasing the recovery rate.



DR HAMDI Abdel Azeim emphasises the role that should be played by NGOs in supporting patients with cancer during a press conference held recently.

"The community also has a role to play, by providing financial, psychological and social support to patients with cancer," he added.

Dr Mervat Mattar, Professor of Internal Medicine and Hematology at Cairo University, said, "The successful treatment of chronic myeloid

leukaemia, has turned the disease from a deadly to a curable one. The genetic defect causing chronic myeloid leukemia can be discovered using blood and bone marrow testing. Based on this, patients can monitor their response level throughout their treatment journey and determine their response rate."