

Number of cancer cases on the rise

By Kabeer Yousuf

MUSCAT — Incidence of cancer in the Sultanate is on the rise, though not at an alarming rate, according to Yuthar al Rawahi, Chairperson of National Association of Cancer Awareness (NACA).

Speaking at the Radiology Conference on 'Update in Breast Imaging' jointly conducted by Aafiyaa Imaging and Diagnostic Centre and the Oman Association of Radiographers at the Institute of Health Sciences on Wednesday, she said although the rate is not exploding, given the campaign and awareness being delivered to the mass, the growing number is quite warranting.

According to a recent medical study by the GCC National Cancer Registries, as many as 71,882 cancer cases were reported in the GCC out of which Oman stood at the second place with 7,938 cases, which is 11 per cent of the total number. Saudi Arabia topped the list with a 51,587 cases which is 71.8 per cent of the total cases. Kuwait was placed third with 7.1 per cent, followed by Bahrain (4.6 per cent), the UAE (3.5 per cent) and Qatar (1.9 per cent).

Breast cancer has been the major killer. Among the nationals 17.5 women in every



100,000 were found to be suffering from the same. Bahrain reported the highest incidence with 53.4 cases per 100,000 women, followed by Qatar (48.2), Kuwait (46.6), the UAE (22.8), Oman (17.5) and Saudi Arabia (14.8).

Factors such as increasing population, need to be given attention. Men were also observed to be suffering from the ailment during the study period of 4 years.

According to her, cancer is becoming more accepted as a disease, better still, a curable disease, if addressed early.

"Cancer was once feared and thought to be non-curable but with increased awareness, the disease is no longer an inevitable death sentence". She said the two projects of NACA

have been fetching great response from the public. The first one of which is Dar Al Hanan opened to public in Jan 2010.

Located in Bausher, adjacent to the Royal Hospital, it provides shelter for 14 families of the affected to pursue following up with the doctors. This was born upon the realisation that most of the parents who come from interior areas do not have a place to stay when their children come for follow up treatment.

The second one, the Mobile Mammography Unit (MMU) has been providing breast cancer screening in Oman since November 2009. Till today, it has done more than 2500 mammograms and it will be ideally placed at the Qurum

City Centre in October, she said, adding, regular mammograms increases a woman's chances of discovering the disease at an early stage, when it is more likely to be curable, particularly during the age of 40 to 69.

The radiology conference was aimed at providing continued medical education to doctors and paramedics in Oman. "In our field, it is very important to remain updated and know what the latest is because technology is developing so fast, and so is medical science," says Dr Hiral Jerajani Kamath, eminent radiologist in Muscat and founder of Aafiyaa Imaging and Diagnostic Centre. "Breast Cancer is a growing problem today. As a woman

ages, the chances of her developing breast cancer increases. "The objective for organising this conference was to be updated about the different imaging modalities used in the diagnosis of Breast Cancer.

Mammography continues to remain the gold standard in diagnosis. Medical science and the technology in imaging is moving at a very rapid pace and hence regular update is crucial for all of us in the medical field" Dr Hiral said.

Besides Yuthar, Dr S K Ramani, Senior Professor of Radiology and Breast Imaging, from Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, spoke on benign and malignant lesions, BIRADS, calcifications on mammograms, MRI and PET. Dr Sukhpal Sawhney, Senior Consultant from SQU Hospital, talked about breast ultrasonography. Dr Taha al Lawati, Senior Consultant Surgeon from Royal Hospital, delivered a lecture on the treatment of breast cancer in Oman. Mohammed al Afifi, Director General of Education and Training was the chief guest and inaugurated the conference.

Targeted at radiologists, doctors and paramedical staff, the programme offered a complete update of what is latest in breast imaging.