

'Early breast cancer detection key to saving lives of women'

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 10: "Early detection of breast cancer is the key towards saving women's lives," says founder of Breast Care Kuwait Dr Nouralhuda Karmani. Karmani made the statement during the first walkathon organized by Breast Care Kuwait on Saturday with an objective to save lives through early detection of breast cancer. The event, which took place under the auspices of the four female MPs with the slogan 'Power Walk', took place at the Avenues Mall in Shuwaikh. A number of families joined the walkathon, along with MPs Aseel Al-Awadhi, Maasouma Al-Mubarak, Salwa Al-Jassar, and Karmani. "Breast cancer, the most common cause of cancer-related deaths, accounts for 16 percent of such deaths in women. However, prevention and regular screening can yield positive results. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 1.2 million people worldwide are expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer this year. Also, mortality rates have been declining among women and this is believed to be the result of early detection and more effective treatments as some 70 percent of cancers are preventable," Karmani asserted.

Reiterating the prevention worldview, Karmani appealed to women to undergo regular screening mammograms for early detection, which is not common in Kuwait compared to other parts of the world. "Prevention is not very popular in eastern cultures," she added. In Kuwait, the surge in breast cancer diagnoses at a later stage stems from a two-prong trend: lack of knowledge about breast cancer and screening and lack of trust in dealing with different health authorities. "Breast cancer can affect anyone — regardless of who you are or where you are from," says Karmani, who also heads the Breast Imaging Unit at Al-Sabah Hospital. "People fighting against breast cancer today include mothers, sisters, daughters and friends. They need our support and acceptance as they struggle to regain their health. We honor their fight when we embrace and share the message that breast cancer screening is vital for all women," she stressed.

Mindset

Karmani believes the prevailing mindset is changing today for the better. She advises women, aged 40 and above, to have regular screenings for breast cancer. "In Kuwait, some 300 women — expatriates and citizens — are diagnosed with breast cancer at the advanced stage yearly. This is why prevention and raising awareness are essential," she opined. October has been declared Breast Cancer Awareness month to raise public awareness on the benefits of early detection. Pink ribbons and pins that are usually associated with breast cancer awareness are distributed at various places throughout the month. Kuwait is no exception. Booths manned by doctors and consultants, as well as survivors, address the deficiency of information on prevention by distributing brochures or talking to women. Prompt response to the disease has saved lives.

Many companies and NGOs have joined together to combat this major health hazard in support of breast cancer awareness month. This year, for instance, in a campaign under the slogan 'Choose Wise and Save Lives', Procter & Gamble (P&G) partnered with regional breast cancer associations to encourage residents across the Gulf to join the fight for women's survival against breast cancer. This month-long awareness campaign aims to educate and empower women to take charge of their own breast health by spreading the message that early detection is the best method for successful treatment. It also aims to ensure that women, regardless of their location, will be able to access information and learn

about breast cancer and the importance of early detection.

In Kuwait, common misconceptions and myths about breast cancer have discouraged some women from scheduling crucial screenings. In partnership with Breast Care Kuwait, P&G aims to address these barriers by giving women in Kuwait an opportunity to show their solidarity with those struggling to overcome breast cancer through this campaign.

“Partnership with P&G is bolstering our efforts to demystify the disease,” Karmani revealed. The ‘Choose Wise and Save Lives’ campaign intends to reach out to one million women across the GCC by being visible in places where women shop. This year, the walkathon focused on connecting with women in shopping centers, in a bid to raise awareness about early screening in a simple and friendly way that emphasizes how each consumer can personally contribute to helping a woman beat the early signs of breast cancer.

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