

# An insight to gynaecological and breast cancer

Cancer is at the moment one of the most daunting and pressing health issues around the world, and research and other related work are being conducted around the world to find long term solutions to this critical and varied disease, if not a cure.

Star Lifestyle recently had the privilege to exclusively interview Dr. Wong Chiung Ing, Senior Consultant, Medical Oncology from Parkway Cancer Centre, Singapore, where she spoke about some very basic concepts and valuable insights about gynaecological cancers, especially those that affect women.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MOST COMMON GYNAECOLOGICAL CANCERS FACED BY WOMEN ALL OVER THE WORLD?

Gynaecological organs in the female body include the uterus, ovaries, fallopian tubes, vagina and vulva.

The most common type of cancer is ovarian cancer. Then we have cervical cancer, which is still very common especially in developing countries, and also uterine cancer.

## BREAST CANCER IS ONE OF THE MOST COMMON CANCERS AMONG WOMEN. CAN YOU TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF BREAST CANCERS THAT AFFECT WOMEN?

The type of breast cancer depends on the cell of origin, i.e. the cells where the tumour starts from. The most common breast cancer is Invasive Ductal Carcinoma or (IDC), sometimes called infiltrating ductal carcinoma. About 80 percent of all breast cancers are invasive ductal carcinomas.

Invasive refers to the cancer having already "invaded" or spread to the surrounding breast tissues. Ductal means that the cancer began in the milk ducts, which are the "pipes" that carry milk from the milk-producing lobules to the nipple. Carcinoma refers to any cancer that begins in the skin or other tissues that cover internal organs

— such as breast tissue. All together, invasive ductal carcinoma refers to cancer that has broken through the wall of the milk duct and begun to invade the tissues of the breast. Over time, invasive ductal carcinoma can spread to the lymph nodes and possibly to other areas of the body.

Another cancer that affects women is Ductal Carcinoma in situ. Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) is a non-invasive breast cancer. Ductal means that the cancer starts inside the milk ducts, carcinoma refers to any cancer that begins in the skin or other tissues (including breast tissue) that cover or line the internal organs, and in situ means "in its original place." DCIS is referred to as "non-invasive" because it hasn't spread beyond the milk duct and into any normal surrounding breast tissue. DCIS isn't life-threatening, but having DCIS can increase the risk of developing an invasive breast cancer later on. Carcinoma is also faced by women in many parts of the world.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MAIN CAUSES OF BREAST CANCER?

There are two categories of causes. The first are non-modifiable causes. These include age, mutation, family history, etc. With age, chances of being affected by breast cancer increase because body cells are less capable of healing themselves compared to cells of a younger person. If someone in the direct family has breast cancer or had breast cancer, the probability of being affected increases.

Then we have modifiable causes, which include lifestyles of women. Obesity, lack of exercise, smoking, alcohol consumption, and uncontrolled consumption of red meat may lead to breast cancer. Hormone replacement therapy has also been linked to causing breast cancer.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF BREAST CANCER?

The most obvious sign is the growth of a lump on the breast. The lump may or may not be painful. At times, there is some sort

of discharge from the nipples, the skin surface and texture over your breast may change, as well as the colour. Also, the skin colour in that area may seem different. Moreover, any red rash may also indicate breast cancer.

## CAN WOMEN'S LIFESTYLE LEAD TO BREAST CANCER?

Of course. As mentioned earlier, obesity, smoking, consuming alcohol, etc. all increase chances of being affected by breast cancer.

## ARE THERE ANY SUGGESTIONS YOU WOULD LIKE TO GIVE OUR READERS SO THAT THEY CAN REDUCE THE CHANCES OF BEING AFFECTED BY BREAST CANCER?

Once a woman reaches 40, she must do a mammogram once every year. Then from 50 to 70 years of age, doing a mammogram twice every year is recommended. Plus, doing ultrasounds regularly, like twice a year, is a good idea for screening of breast cancer.

The most important thing that women of all ages should do is Breast Self-Examination. Breast self-examination (BSE) is a screening method used in an attempt to detect breast cancer as early as possible. The method involves the woman herself looking at and feeling each breast for possible lumps, distortions or swelling.

This should be done once every month. It is better to do this examination after your menstruation has ended. One can carry out this test in two ways. First is by looking at a mirror. While keeping your arms at your sides or arms raised above or behind your head, look out for any change in size or shape of the breast, or any dimpling of the skin, or any change in appearance of the nipples.

The next way is by lying down and placing a pillow under the left shoulder, and with the left hand under your head. Use the three inner fingers of your right hand, hold

the fingers flat to check the left breast. Press firmly, and using circular movements, feel for any lumps. Start on the outside edge of the breast and go inward in circles. Repeat the above steps using your left hand to check the right breast.

**By Faiza Khondokar**

If you have any queries, or questions regarding cancer, feel free to contact- Parkway Cancer Centre Dhaka Office: Suite-B3, Level-4, House-10, Road-53 Gulshan-2, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh, Helpline: (+88) 0197 777 0 777 Email: dhaka@canhope.org

## GOING PINK THIS OCTOBER

The month of October is observed across countries throughout the world as the Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Breast cancer is by far the most common cancer amongst women worldwide, both in developed and developing countries. In low- and middle-income countries the incidence has been rising steadily in the last couple of years due to increase in life expectancy, increased urbanisation and adoption of western lifestyles. While any cancer ultimately leads to the inevitable decline in quality of life, for breast cancer in particular, currently there is not sufficient knowledge on the direct causes. Therefore, early detection of the disease remains the cornerstone of breast cancer control. Throughout the month, observers donning the associated pink ribbon, strive to increase attention and support for the awareness, early detection and treatment as well as palliative care of this disease.

# আদার নতুন নাম

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