#NOTES

# Breast cancer and the importance of standing together






Cancer is a dreaded word. A fair share of misunderstanding still prevails in Bangladeshi society regarding the illness. Diagnosis of cancer, and breast cancer in particular, can instantly change a woman's life and shape the lives of those who are close to her.

A person suffering from cancer is all of a sudden forced to navigate life through uncertainty, social stigma, and a share of anxiety. And her relatives live in fear of the inevitable and the looming prospect of financial hardships.

However, what is not fully understood is that in many cases, early detection can improve the outcome of the treatment and often make full recovery a possibility.

**EARLY DETECTION AND AWARENESS**

In our battle against the disease, perhaps our efforts should focus on early detection and awareness. It is prevalent in all economic levels of society. So, awareness programmes must be conducted among women of poorer backgrounds and also ensure that they have access to adequate medical facilities.

Women must be taught to perform self-examinations, which can lead to early detection. They must be able to recognise the early signs. While these may not necessarily mean she is suffering from cancer, ignoring them can often delay proper diagnosis and appropriate treatment.

Women must also be informed that they must rise above the fear and the embarrassment that they often face in seeking medical advice and making an early diagnosis possible.

**EMOTIONAL SUPPORT MATTERS**

Bangladesh is still a society where family bonds are strong. Relatives are thus important in providing emotional and psychological support to women diagnosed with breast cancer. However, the concept of counselling the terminally ill is still not fully understood among the general population. We expect patients to remain strong despite all odds, often leaving them unable to express their fears and anxiety.

Professional counselling can sometimes help people in these situations. But one must also realise that seeking such professional help can be an expensive affair. Counselling, even by friends and family, can at times help patients process the emotional distress. Simply listening to their problems without being judgemental and respecting a patient's decision regarding treatment can go a long way in the healing of a cancer patient.

We as a society must realise that caring for a cancer patient does not cease with the end of the treatment. Long after, patients may still experience fatigue, discomfort, and emotional distress. And at every step of this, we must stand beside them.

Patients need emotional support and care throughout recovery and beyond. Standing beside them at every stage can help ensure that no woman has to face this difficult journey alone.

**-- LS Desk**
**Photo: Collected**

