

EDITORIAL

Cancer Therapy

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Recently, in Bahrain, the number of cancer patients and the number of consultants interested in cancer have increased¹.

Trained technical staff such as radiologist, pathologist and oncologist interested in cancer have also become available, and an oncology department has been established in Salmaniya Medical Centre.

Cancer patients from Bahrain used to go to Kuwait for radiotherapy, but after the Gulf crisis the Kuwait facilities were not available to Bahraini patients. Therefore new facilities for radiotherapy had to be found. The Bahrain Government did not hesitate to arrange and pay for Bahraini cancer patients to be treated in new centres abroad.

The subsidy by the Government is available for all Bahraini oncology patients. Those who preferred to be treated at a centre different than that chosen by the Government did so at their own expense.

Therefore whether they can afford the overseas treatment or not, Bahraini cancer patients are faced with the dilemma of leaving their own country, friends, most of their relatives and their own environment for a treatment that is only available overseas. Many of these patients suffered from depression during the treatment which might be due to affliction with cancer compounded by the estranged environment. Research has proven that depression reduces the immunity and the latter promotes cancer growth².

All the above factors lead the Ministry of Health to take the important step of forming cancer registry and a cancer control committee and also to establish a Cancer Treatment Centre (CTC). To avoid budget restraints, I believe that the CTC should be established as a joint venture between the Government and the public where the latter may participate financially and administratively. The committee responsible for the preparatory study for the CTC should represent all specialities including psychiatry. The public should be represented in order to facilitate community participation in the functioning of the Centre. Research department linked to this centre should be established from the beginning in order to set up the baseline research in cancer in this area. The changing environment and cancer incidence should be studied because research indicates that environment and life style, including diet, play larger casual role than genetics in most cancers³. Many people know the carcinogenic effect of tobacco smoke, asbestos, benzene, ultraviolet and gamma rays, but most remain ignorant of the growing scientific evidence about the relationship between nutrition and cancer^{2,3}.

REFERENCES

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