

Proper treatment of breast cancer stressed

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's leading experts on health, education, population and human rights have made a resounding appeal for prevention and treatment of breast cancer that claims hundreds of lives each year in the country.

Marking the Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in collaboration with UNWOMEN and UN Resident Coordinator's Office held a multi-stakeholders consultation on 'Early Detection Save Lives' in Islamabad on Wednesday.

The initiative which was inspired by a meeting on the issue between UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Dr Fehmida Mirza, former speaker of the National Assembly in August this year, called for development of a national framework to comprehensively scope the prevalence and impediments to early detection and quality treatment of breast cancer in Pakistan.

Dr Mirza, herself a survivor of breast cancer, was commended for leading the campaign against breast cancer in Pakistan.

The experts agreed that awareness regarding the disease had a direct link with literacy, education and right to access information.

Dr Mirza reiterated that in Pakistan breast cancer was intrinsically linked with women's lack of access to essential information and awareness.

She pointed out that it was an issue that concerned availability of and access to equitable and comprehensive quality health care but largely remained off the public discourse due to cultural barriers, shame and stigma attached to the disclosure of the disease.

In his welcome remarks, UN Resident Coordinator Timo Pakkala emphasised the need for concrete measures of raising awareness and tangible actions to address the issue.

He highlighted the need for collaborative planning in action with the inclusion of all stakeholders.

Sangeeta Rana Thapa, deputy representative of UNWOMEN in Pakistan, said that breast cancer prevalence and prevention must also be analysed in context of women's lack of empowerment, marginalisation and gender inequalities.

Dr Kozue Kay Nagata, UNESCO director/representative in Pakistan, in her vote of thanks paid a rich tribute to the campaign and acknowledged expert views from the panelists along with the presence of audiences and their inputs.

Source: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2013\10\31\story_31-10-2013_pg7_10