



Breast Cancer

There are few causes in our world more deserving and more urgent than the fight against cancer. Cancer does not discriminate; it affects adults, children, men, women, the rich and the poor. We have all been touched by cancer in one way or another either personally or by knowing a family member, friend, colleague, or neighbor.

In Jordan, not only is breast cancer the most common malignancy afflicting women, but it is also the most common cancer overall, with an average of 700 new cases diagnosed each year.

This Mother's Day, take the opportunity to remind your own mother and other women you love to undergo a clinical breast exam and a mammogram. Breast cancer is 90% treatable if detected in its early stages. However, many women fear breast cancer screenings, unwilling to face the possibility that they – like us all – are vulnerable to cancer. Early detection of breast cancer can save your life!

We spoke with Mrs. Suzanne Haydar Murad, one of the breast cancer survivors here in Amman, mother of Walid, Razan, and Zaid, who welcomed us into her loving, warm home and shared with us her experience of breast cancer.

HOW DID YOU LEARN THAT YOU HAD BREAST CANCER? DID YOU HAVE ANY SPECIFIC SIGNS?

I was suffering from an abnormality on my breast for approximately one year. After several consultations, I was diagnosed with breast cancer, at the

Warning Signs for Breast Cancer

Check your breast for:

- ❖ Lump, hard knot or thickening
- ❖ Swelling, warmth, redness or darkening
- ❖ Change in the size or shape
- ❖ Dimpling or puckering of the skin
- ❖ Itchy, scaly sore or rash on your nipple
- ❖ Pulling in of your nipple or other parts
- ❖ Nipple discharge that starts suddenly
- ❖ New pain in one spot that doesn't go away

end of stage 1. It was unclear, since the first signs of my cancer was very similar to skin eczema. Excretions from the nipple that led my doctor to test for cancer.

SO YOU HAD NO RISK FACTORS?

No. I was only 32 years old (the average age of breast cancer sufferers in Jordan is 45). I had no family history of cancer, and I had already given birth to 3 children. I had no exposure to radiation and was never on long-term hormonal replacement therapy.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH OTHER WOMEN?

My message for EVERY woman is

not to hesitate or be ashamed. If you notice any change in one or both of your breasts, check with your doctor immediately. Insist on finding out what it is. No one knows your own body better than you do, what is normal and what is not. One of the most important advantages of learning how to perform the self breast exam is that it makes you more knowledgeable and familiar with your breasts, so that you can detect any change as early as possible.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE WOMEN WHO FEAR FINDING OUT ABOUT BREAST CANCER?

It is important to note that not every change in the breast is indicative of breast cancer. In fact, 80% of lumps found in the breast are not cancerous. Whatever change there is in the breast, if found early, increases the chances for successful treatment.

EXPLAIN THE JOURNEY OF YOUR TREATMENT

I was initially fearful of my family's reactions. We were all in shock. It seemed as if everyone was more concerned about each other's reactions. I had to remain strong for my family, and my family remained strong and supportive throughout my treatment. My cancer, thankfully, was

treated with surgery and chemotherapy. It was not always easy. After the start of my treatment, I lost all of my hair. However, within months, my cancer was in remission. I felt a sense of empowerment during my treatment. I felt lucky to only have to endure the pain of chemotherapy. I had the blessing of having a huge support system within my family.

HOW DID YOUR CANCER IMPACT YOUR FAMILY?

I was the first woman in my family to have cancer. When my family learned of my illness, they urged me to seek treatment abroad. After doing extensive research on my necessary treatment, I learned that the same treatment was available right here in Jordan at the King Hussein Cancer Center. I chose to stay here in Jordan, close to my family and children. I have never regretted my decision. It is so important to be surrounded by loved ones whilst undergoing these types of procedures.

I have heart-felt gratitude and appreciation to my mother, father, and my husband. So much of my medicine was their love, support, and understanding, a vital key to my recovery. I really want them to know how much I appreciate their patience and help then and now as well.

HOW HAS YOUR CANCER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

I led a normal life before I was diagnosed with breast cancer, but I did not appreciate that life as much as I do now. After my disease, I started to live every day in every positive way. I now avoid problems and petty issues.


The Jordan Breast Cancer Program is a nation-wide initiative for the development and provision of comprehensive services for the early detection and screening of breast cancer for all women in Jordan within the age group of 40-59. This national Program has been established under the directive of the Minister of Health and is governed by a National Steering Committee consisting of: the Minister of Health, King Hussein Cancer Foundation and Center, World Health Organization, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, Royal Medical Services, King Abdullah Hospital, USAID's Private Sector Project for Women's Health, Jordan University, Hashemite University and the Syndicate of Private Hospitals. The King Hussein Cancer Foundation and Center have been tasked with the leadership of the Jordan Breast Cancer Program. An executive board oversees the operations of the program, provides direction and ensures the implementation of action plans.

I make the best of every day that God gives me to live, learning from everyone, and applying it in a positive way. I have also joined the SANAD group, which is a cancer support group service at the King Hussein Cancer Center comprised of breast cancer survivors dedicated to supporting cancer patients and their families by sharing

their own experiences. I have the desire to support all women that come to the King Hussein Cancer Center. Here, I wipe the tears of women going through the same pain and emotions that I endured as I journeyed through my battle with cancer. In addition to comforting women my own age, I am also able to comfort older women who are the age of my mom. Knowing that I have been in their situation develops a deep-rooted trust, a bond that a woman needs to overcome her fears.

ADVICE TO OTHERS

I am a strong believer in early detection. This is what most likely saved my life. I encourage my mom, sisters, and sisters-in-law, and every woman out there to not only undergo annual clinical breast exams, but to also do monthly self breast exams and get annual mammograms after the age of 40.

We urge you to encourage your mothers and all other women you know and love to make self breast exams a regular part of their lifestyle and to have regular and annual clinical breast exams and mammograms. 

Early Detection Saves Lives!

