Science and emotion in the fight against cancer

Ştiinţă şi emoţie în lupta împotriva cancerului

Support and help are never enough when it comes to women diagnosed with cancer. For these women, both medical treatment and unconditional support of those around matter. Considering these two essential components of the fight against cancer, AstraZeneca organized the “Science and Emotion” event at the end of March.

This meeting was a message of support for women diagnosed with ovarian cancer and women in general, to understand that they are not alone in this struggle, and those innovations in medicine and oncology, along with the trust and support of the people around can bring back the force to defeat.

The conference brought together physicians with oncology expertise, representatives of patient associations and cancer support groups: Lidia Stoica from “Regina Maria” Polyclinic Foundation, psychologist Adela Szentes, from ANAIS Association, Victoria Asanache, navigator of oncology patients, President of the Association for the Prevention and Fight against Cancer “Amazonia”, as well as health journalists.

“The most important is the patient’s perception of treatment. In the past, the patient readily accepted treatment and did not ask too many questions. Things have changed: the patient reads, is informed and asks many questions about the survival rate and the quality of life. The oncologist has to face the challenge of answering these questions and finding the right answer for each patient, because the therapeutic decision should be taken together with him”, said associate professor Dana Stânculeanu, primary medical oncology physician at the “Prof. Dr. Alexandru Trestioreanu” Institute of Oncology Bucharest.

The risk of ovarian cancer is higher in women at menopause - about 90% of women who develop ovarian cancer are over 40 years old, but most of the cases occur in women over 60 years of age. “Clinical trials are one of the greatest opportunities for oncology patients. Besides, it is the only opportunity to benefit from innovative, cutting-edge therapy. Perhaps outside of clinical trials, it is impossible to administer such a therapy to these patients. Patients have a lot of benefits through clinical trials, being evaluated, and monitored to standards similar to those of civilized countries. There are also benefits to the health care system, for the health budget, that can be spared from spending. There are many reasons and advantages of participating in clinical trials and we must first understand what they mean”, declared dr. Dana Clement, primary medical oncology physician at the Regional Institute of Oncology Iaşi. At the same time, for patients with a family history of ovarian or breast cancer, today specialists have the possibility to recommend genetic tests to identify possible specific mutations associated with these forms of neoplasms, so that the specialist can recommend appropriate therapeutic behaviour.

In addition to therapeutic aspects, building a trustworthy doctor-patient relationship, proper communication, and psycho-emotional support can help oncoplastic patients and their relatives to manage better the fight against cancer.

Receiving a cancer diagnosis is a powerful emotional impact for patients. In this context, a proper and appropriate communication from the medical team and the establishment of a trustworthy relationship with the patient and his/her family can positively influence the way the disease is managed.

Lidia Stoica, from “Regina Maria” Polyclinic Foundation, was among the speakers of the event, talking about the Support Group for Cancer Patients and their family members. “Although we have been active for only one year, so far, 91 women have benefited from the services offered by the «Regina Maria» Polyclinic Foundation. They had medical assistance, physical exercise activities to prevent lymphedema and to keep their body weight under control, courses on emotional and spiritual development, as well as social actions such as theatre and jazz nights”, explained Lidia Stoica.

Victoria Asanache, navigator of oncology patients, president of the Association for Prevention and Fight against Cancer “Amazonia”, talked about the role of the medical navigator. “The patient should have a complete picture of the medical area. Patients come to doctors primarily for medical explanations, wanting to know more about the disease, and to be properly informed. The patient navigator makes common front with the doctor, being beside the patient with explanation and guidance. Last year, I was able to enroll the «Patient navigator» in the code of professions. Soon, navigator courses that last over a year, with more than 1000 hours and a broad practical component in hospitals, will be available for all who want to specialize in this field”.

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