

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

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لمكافحة سرطان الثدي ونشر الوعي والبحوث

US-MIDDLE EAST PARTNERSHIP FOR
BREAST CANCER AWARENESS AND RESEARCH

First Lady Laura Bush Back in the Middle East to Support Breast Cancer Programs

Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt – On May 18, 2008, Mrs. Laura Bush, First Lady of the United States, and Her Excellency Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, First Lady of the Arab Republic of Egypt, hosted a celebratory meeting for organizations and advocates who are raising awareness of breast cancer and working towards a cure. Mrs. Bush heralded the US–Middle East Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research—supported by the U.S. Department of State’s Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). Mrs. Bush noted significant achievements in Jordan and Saudi Arabia and applauded the start of a second phase, beginning in Egypt and the Palestinian Territories with the introduction of comprehensive baseline assessments of breast cancer awareness and services. Based on the results of this newly developed research tool, the Partnership will consider opportunities to expand its reach in a meaningful way.



Mrs. Laura Bush delivers remarks in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. White House photo by Shealah Craighead.

The meeting, held at the Grand Rotana Resort, brought to the forefront ongoing efforts in Egypt to raise breast cancer awareness and expand screening and treatment. Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among women in Egypt and more attention is needed to begin to have positive impacts on survivorship and long-term prognosis. The Partnership hopes to provide additional resources and support to accelerate the response to breast cancer.

The time is now for women in the Middle East, as was evidenced by the sharing of personal stories by those touched by breast cancer, including survivors. A long-time breast cancer activist, Mrs. Bush described the early struggles the United States endured to eliminate stigma and promote the need for regular screenings. Through the US-Middle East Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research, lessons learned can be shared and best practices employed from decades of work in the United States.

With USAID funding, Egypt is undertaking a comprehensive, country-wide, baseline assessment of breast cancer among Egyptian women. Specific outcomes will show how the disease affects women, what resources are available to prevent it, and recommendations for future programs addressing breast cancer screening, diagnosis, and treatment.

“Today these women are receiving treatment that may save their lives. And by bravely telling their stories, just like you [the survivors] did, they’re empowering other women to take charge of their own health.” – First Lady Laura Bush

Two days earlier on May 16, 2008, Mrs. Bush visited the King Fahd Medical City in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia to show additional support for the Partnership’s breast cancer programs. During this visit, Mrs. Bush remarked how “proud [she was] that [the] two countries, Saudi Arabia and the United States, have come together to reach out to women... because [they’re] saving lives, and...making lasting friendships.” Mrs. Bush was also impressed with the increased rate of screening in Riyadh and around Saudi Arabia.

Furthermore, the Partnership plans to begin implementation of a baseline assessment in the Palestinian Territories by early summer. Over the next few months the Partnership will also reach out to Morocco— where approximately 20 new cases of breast cancer are detected daily. Discussions of conducting a baseline assessment of breast cancer and connecting the country with the Partnership will also take place. ♀

For additional information, please email USMEPartnership@icfi.com

ICF International implements the “US –Middle East Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research” under a cooperative agreement from the US Department of State’s Middle East Partnership Initiative

US–Middle East Partnership Helps Launch Course for the Cure™ Program in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia – On February 23–27, 2008, the Saudi Cancer Society, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, and the US Department of State launched the Course for the Cure™ program in Saudi Arabia. A four-city tour to Riyadh, Jeddah, Qassim, and Dammam kicked off promotion of the program with training on Community Profiles, which look at an area's demographics, local breast health services, statistics on breast cancer incidence and mortality, and barriers and access to care.

Master Trainers from the Saudi Cancer Society led the training in each location. Over the next five months, the program will roll out four other training modules focused on Volunteer and Organization Development, Awareness and Education, Fundraising, and Advocacy.

Saudi Master Trainers and Program Managers, prepared for and planned the back-to-back Course for the Cure™ launches while participating in a January 2008 "Training of Trainers" event in Dallas, Texas (see article on page 2). Medical and charitable organizations donated training space and volunteers to help host the events. These organizations included King Fahad Medical City (Riyadh), King Abdulaziz University Hospital (Jeddah), the Qassim Women's Committee (Qassim), and the Saudi Cancer Foundation – Eastern Province (Dammam).



Program Cities: Jeddah, Qassim, Riyadh, and Dammam

Representatives from the US Department of State, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, The Institute for International Education, and the Saudi Cancer Society traveled as a team to all four locations to provide support and help promote the training.

At each city's training, Dr. Samia Al-Amoudi introduced and provided an overview of the Partnership and the Komen program. Then, Master Trainers Fatima Al Qarzai and Huwayda Darweesh led participants through the first module, involving them in icebreakers and team exercises. In total, 78 female Saudi doctors, nurses, students, and community leaders were trained to begin conducting profiles of their communities to lay the groundwork for breast cancer activism.

The training event attracted local and national media coverage in each city, calling attention to the Saudi Cancer Society's involvement in the Course for the Cure™ program.



Representatives on panel at a Course for the Cure™ session

Since the launch of the US–Middle East Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research in the Kingdom in October 2007, awareness of the need for early detection and treatment has increased. The number of women receiving breast cancer screenings at the Abdullatif Cancer Screening Center, which the First Lady toured on her visit to Saudi Arabia, increased almost fivefold, from an average of six patients a day to more than 25. Extensive media coverage of Partnership activities in Saudi Arabia, including the launch events and the four-city tour, has helped educate the public about the benefits of early breast cancer detection and treatment. In total, more than 100 different news outlets have written or aired stories referencing the Partnership, the First Lady's visit, the four-city tour, as well as ongoing breast cancer advocacy and awareness programs. 



Training of Trainers

DALLAS, Texas – On January 20–26, 2008, Susan G. Komen for the Cure and the Institute of International Education (IIE) brought together teams of Program Managers and Master Trainers from the eight Global Initiative countries—Brazil, Costa Rica, Jordan, Mexico, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Ukraine, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—for a Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop in Dallas, Texas. During the weeklong intensive training, participants learned how to conduct dynamic workshops using five Course for the Cure™ modules: Community Profile, Volunteer and Organization Development, Awareness and Education, Fundraising, and Advocacy. The modules are based on Komen's best practices in breast cancer awareness and advocacy, and are designed to be customizable to meet local needs. The Komen program empowers global breast cancer advocates to establish sustainable programs that educate the public and save lives.



Saudi Arabia and Jordan Course for the Cure™ Program Leaders

Training participants also had opportunities to interact with Komen staff including Hala Moddemog, president and CEO; Susan Brown, director of health education; Catherine Oliveros, community health specialist; Diana Rowden, vice president of health sciences; and Cindy Schneible, vice president of development.

The Global Initiative relies on collaboration among local partner organizations in each country, including the Saudi Cancer Society in Saudi Arabia, King Hussein Cancer Foundation (KHCF) in Jordan, and the Health Authority Abu Dhabi (HAAD) in the UAE. Global Initiative staff from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the UAE

comprise a diverse team of survivors, healthcare providers, and public health outreach workers.

Upon returning from Dallas, Program Managers and Master Trainers immediately began implementing the Course for the Cure™ modules in their home countries.

The first module focuses on creating a Community Profile—an assessment that includes demographics, a map of breast health services, statistics on breast cancer incidence and mortality, and qualitative information about barriers and access to care. Using the skills, knowledge, and tools gained through the workshop, Course for the Cure™ participants have begun developing their own community profiles. In many communities, this is the first time such information has been compiled, and participants are excited to be part of this groundbreaking effort to combat breast cancer.

"Breast cancer is a human issue and it shows you how human issues can bring people together....It's the same thing if you have a lady in the United States, a lady in Japan, a lady in Saudi Arabia, we share the same problems. We are women, we are mothers, we have breast cancer....It shows that there are a lot of things in common between women everywhere in the world." - Dr. Samia Al-Amoudi

Coinciding with the program launch in Saudi Arabia, Komen invited Dr. Samia Al-Amoudi, an assistant professor at King Abdulaziz University and a consultant obstetrician gynecologist, IVF, to Washington, D.C., to speak to members of the diplomatic community. The event, hosted by First Lady Laura Bush, showcased the Global Initiative and Komen's expansion to create sustainable breast cancer outreach and education programs around the globe. Dr. Al-Amoudi was the first Saudi woman to speak publicly about breast cancer, sharing her personal battle through writing and speaking extensively about her experience. 

Partnership Highlights is a newsletter showcasing breast cancer advocacy and research efforts across the Middle East. If you have a story that you would like to share, or would like additional information regarding any of the stories you read, please email USMEPartnership@icfi.com. As this is the first edition, we look forward to hearing from you and helping share your successes in the fight to end breast cancer.



Saudi Arabia Partner, King Fahad Medical City, Hosts National Meeting on Breast Cancer Research

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia – On March 22–23, 2008, King Fahad Medical City (KFMC), in coordination with the US-Middle East Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research, hosted a national meeting to assess the state of breast cancer research in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The meeting, titled “Breast Cancer in Saudi Arabia: Road to the Future,” brought together more than 35 of the top breast cancer researchers, oncologists, pathologists, radiologists, and cancer registry specialists from institutions across the Kingdom, including King Faisal Specialists Hospital and Research Center, King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology, and the Saudi Food and Drug Authority. From the United States, partner institutions nominated doctors and research experts from The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center (MDACC) and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute (DFCI) to offer their expertise and guidance.

KFMC’s goal for the event was to develop collaborative research efforts among Saudi medical institutions and premiere US medical institutions.



U.S. and Saudi participants in the KSA National Breast Cancer Research Meeting

On the first day, presentations from Saudi and US representatives focused on topics such as current clinical practices to treat breast cancer, establishment of an epidemiological database, tissue banking (Dr. Fraser Symmans, MDACC), breast cancer in young women (Dr. Ann Partridge, DFCI), and the importance of combining clinical care with top-rate research. Dr. Eric Winer, director of breast oncology at DFCI and chief scientific advisor for Susan G. Komen for the Cure, presented on “Multi-Institutional

Clinical Trials” and emphasized the need for collaboration across institutions in breast cancer research. As is the case with many hospitals in Saudi Arabia established in the past five to ten years, KFMC has focused on getting patient services up and running, not on research. With top-notch facilities and patient care services now available, KFMC officials believe the time has come to focus on improving research methods, which will lead to improved clinical care and greater hope for women diagnosed with breast cancer in the Kingdom.

During the second day of the meeting, participants discussed potential research projects, including the need to update and properly maintain the National Cancer Registry in order to gain a more accurate, detailed picture of breast cancer incidences in the region. Dr. Michele Forman, of MDACC, emphasized the importance of database development and how a basic questionnaire, used to capture uniform data sets from breast cancer patients (height, weight, risk factors, lifestyle, etc.), can highlight common linkages in breast cancer incidences. In the coming months, with support from US partners, KFMC and fellow Riyadh-based research hospitals, including King Faisal Specialists Hospital and Research Center, plan to begin efforts to create stronger databases. Initial research projects will be small in scope, with two to four participating institutions. Plans to expand beyond Riyadh will be rolled out following the success of an initial pilot phase.

Meeting participants also discussed the benefits of e-learning, fellowships, mentoring programs, and additional medical research meetings to improve breast cancer research. Moving forward, KFMC and other Saudi research hospitals plan to replicate the US model for top-level clinical research linked to patient care services. With support from the US-Middle East Partnership, collaborative relationships and information exchanges should help speed this process along. 

Jordan Continuing to Expand Early Detection and Awareness Efforts

Since First Lady Laura Bush’s visit to Amman in October 2007, Jordan has continued to expand its breast cancer advocacy efforts through innovative awareness campaigns and advances in screening policies and programs. The Jordan Breast Cancer Program (JBCP), a nationwide initiative to develop and provide comprehensive services for screening and early detection of breast cancer, is leading this effort.



JBCP is governed by a National Steering Committee comprising the major stakeholders in health, including the US-Middle East Partnership institutions and King Hussein Cancer Foundation and Center.

JBCP organized two milestone events in March 2008. The first event was the launch of the "Salima" (Be Well) campaign, under the slogan "Early Detection of Breast Cancer Saves Lives!" The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the importance of early detection and having clinical breast exams and mammograms. To ensure the message reached a wide audience, JBCP coordinated educational lectures, radio messages, television interviews, articles, information booths at shopping malls, discounted mammography services, free clinical breast examinations, and a free hotline. The campaign came on the heels of Jordan's activation of mammography units for screening and new units in health care centers, and paves the way for the upcoming Breast Cancer Awareness Month campaign in October.

The second event was a roundtable discussion with more than 40 specialists that JBCP convened to discuss and seek endorsement of its National Breast Cancer Screening and Diagnosis Guidelines. These guidelines, which are near publication, are designed to provide health care professionals with a consistent framework for screening and evaluating a spectrum of breast lesions. The guidelines were adopted from the National Comprehensive Cancer Network and were modified by experts to suit the Jordanian context.

In addition to the efforts being led by JBCP, King Hussein Cancer Center (KHCC) was awarded JD 300,000 in November 2007 for their work with the US Department of State's Middle East

Partnership Initiative (MEPI). KHCC is projected to receive up to JD 250,000 in 2008.



Volunteers at City Mall, Jordan

Both events build on Jordan's current Partnership-related breast cancer programming with the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Global Initiative for Breast Cancer Awareness and Making It Our Business, a workplace awareness program for breast cancer introduced by the King Hussein Cancer Foundation in cooperation with the Vital Voices Global Partnership and Middle East Partnership Initiative. With the continued support and cooperation of the Ministry of Health, the King Hussein Cancer Foundation and Center, the private medical sector, and other partners, JBCP hopes to continue to reach more women and increase their access to high-quality screening services. 

The US-Middle East Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research is the first partnership for fighting breast cancer between the United States and the Middle East in an effort to provide medical expertise and support to the region, and work collectively in the areas of awareness, research, training, community outreach, and women's empowerment. The initiative works to reduce breast cancer incidence and increase early detection throughout the Middle East by way of improved awareness, increased clinical resources, and world-class research.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MDACC Global Academic Programs (GAP) 2008 Conference

June 3-6, 2008, Houston, TX – June 5th will focus on breast cancer

Susan G. Komen's National Race for the Cure

June 6-7, 2008, Washington D.C.

"Taking Action on Advocacy" Strategy Meetings

June 9-10, 2008, Washington D.C.

Partnership Web Site Launch

Summer 2008

International Breast Cancer Conference

October 2008, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

US-Middle East Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research Advocacy Conference

October 2008, Amman, Jordan

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