

جمعية
برنامج العون والامل لرعاية مرضى السرطان
غزة - فلسطين



Aid and Hope Program (AHP) for Cancer Patients Care
Gaza - Palestine

Fact sheet

Health crisis: Challenges facing cancer patients, become worse and more complicated during the pandemic of COVID19



Within the project

**The Palestinian Consortium for Non-violence:
towards a regional movement on Non-violence**

Preparation

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Aid and Hope Program (AHP) for Cancer Patients Care

Gaza - Palestine

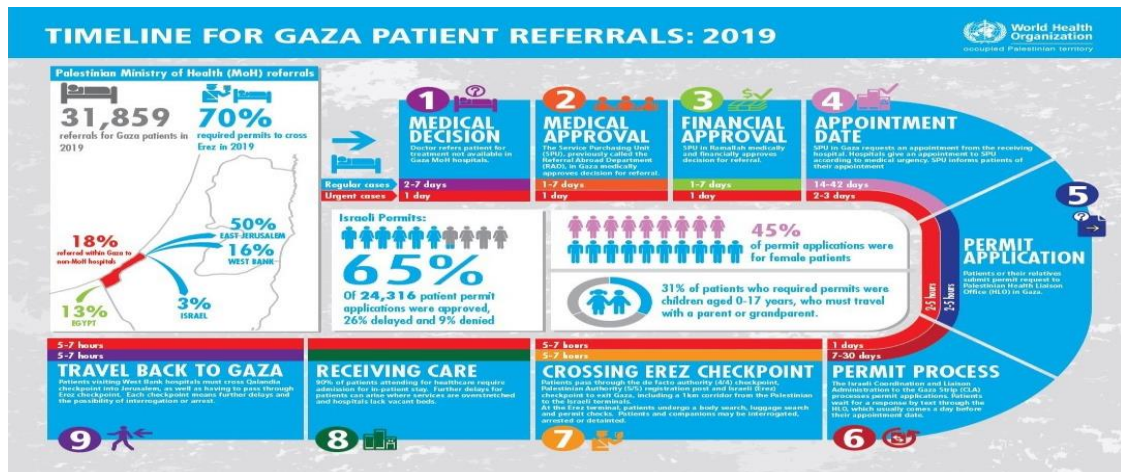
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Health crisis: Challenges facing cancer patients, become worse and more complicated during the pandemic of COVID19

Overview:

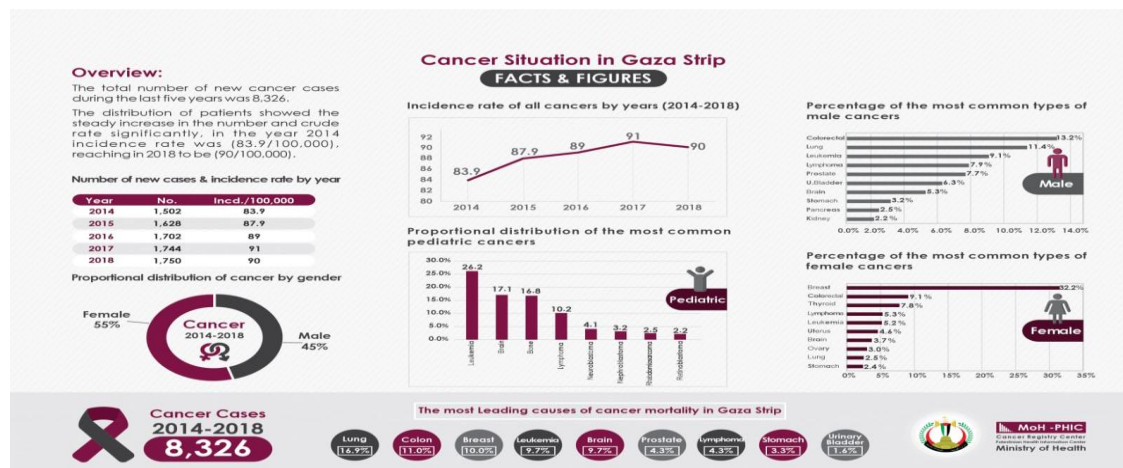
- It's not easy to be sick with cancer, and it's even more difficult in the Gaza Strip, which has been under siege for the past 14 years. More than two million people live in a place, known as the most high-density population over all the world, without a single radiation therapy unit or one PET-CT system; plus, other diagnostic means and cancer-fighting medications are in meager supply, too, and don't always meet the needs of those whose lives are at risk
- In Gaza, monthly newly discover cases around (120-130) new cases, and the total cancer patients are (8326) distribution between male, female and pediatric, during the last five years (2014-2018)
- Female, are the high percent (55%), male around (45%), breast cancer was the most common type (75%) of all cancer cases, and occupying first place among cancers of the female patients, Colon cancer was the most common type among males, representing (13.5%) of male cancers. In children, the most common cases of pediatric cancers were Leukemia (26.2%)
- The most common cancer mortality in general population was Bronchus and Lung (16.9%), Colorectal (11%) and Breast (10%)

Referral procedure and pathway:



General problems and obstacles:

- Israel's blockade of the strip, which began in 2007, successive wars
- Israel's "dual use" list also prohibits the importing of certain materials into Gaza, including essential medicines, supplies, and equipment under the pretext that they could be used for military purposes
- The Israeli authorities further restricted eligibility criteria for exit permits, limiting those only to cancer patients and emergency cases
- Fatah-Hamas split that has effectively created two separate governments in the West Bank and Gaza
- Fragmentation and fragility health system (Palestinian healthcare system)
- shortages of medication, medical disposable, and medical equipment
- These problems have become even worse after the Palestinian Authority halted its cooperation with Israel on May 21, in response to the threat to begin annexing parts of the West Bank.
- Gaza patients still need to acquire Israeli permits to access advanced medical treatment such as CTs, PET scans, and radiation therapy at East Jerusalem hospitals.
- Gaza financial problems, and specially for patient
- Palestinian MOH decision to reduce health services delivery in order to localization the medical services, and to decrease transmission risk.
- This included efforts to localize some essential services, such as the short-term provision of limited chemotherapy through private providers in Gaza.
- Cancer specialist hospital with all its needs and demands not available
- The ability of Gaza's hospitals to provide adequate diagnosis and treatment to cancer patients is severely limited due to chronic shortages of medicines and lack of medical equipment. Nuclear medicine scanning needed for staging cancers, radiotherapy equipment and some specialized surgeries are unavailable. More than half of essential chemotherapy drugs were at less than a month's supply throughout
- Proper cancer diagnosis and effective treatment are essential to improve the prognosis of patients and their chance of survival
- Every cancer patient has the right to health. This means being able to access quality and acceptable health care and to enjoy the conditions of life that support staying healthy .



Problems during the COVID19 pandemic:

- Cancer patients have a unique risk profile in this pandemic.
- Many patients, especially those actively on treatment, have high levels of contact with the health care system.
- Most of these locations are shared spaces by necessity, putting patients at an increased risk for COVID-19 exposure.
- Additionally, many, if not all, cancer patients are immunocompromised, through the immunosuppressive effects of anticancer drugs, supportive medications such as steroids, and the cancer itself.
- Many cancer patients are over 60 years old, putting them in the highest-risk category for COVID-19-related morbidity and mortality.
- Postponing of adjuvant chemotherapy or elective surgery for stable cancer should be considered in endemic areas.
- stronger personal protection provisions should be made for patients with cancer or cancer survivors.
- more intensive surveillance or treatment should be considered when patients with cancer are infected with COVID19, especially in older patients or those with other comorbidities.
- Cancer patients need referral for advance center, while restrictions eased after an initial decline in COVID-19 cases, the recent increase of cases in the West Bank and Israel may cause authorities to extend the limitations on exit from Gaza to prevent the occurrence of a community outbreak there.
- Quarantine rules, 21 days after each referral to complete the cancer protocols

Recommendations:

- strengthening respect, protection and fulfilment of the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health
- To ensure regular and reliable access.
- Build special hospital for cancer in Gaza
- Localize the medical service completely (chemotherapy, radiotherapy and diagnostic)
- Providing a complete integrated medical service by developing health and management strategies for cancer patients, such as palliative treatment
- Activating the governmental role through the National Cancer Committee
- Capacity building for the local staff, attracting and dispatching medical personnel to improve service and fill the shortage of human competencies
- Enhancing the pioneer NGOs in the cancer patient sector by securing a financing network to support the community
- Creating sustainable and creative ideas consistent with referral entitlements for treatment abroad

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