

National congress: collective participation

National congress “Comprehensive Cancer Control Program”

The national congress of Comprehensive Cancer Control Program was held in IRIB conference center from 4th to 6th February 2014.

In spite of an unprecedented freezing cold weather in Tehran, the important subject of this conference inspired the cancer specialists and other experts to get together. The participation of the Ministry of Health, IRIB of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Tehran Municipality, Scientific Associations, Research centers and NGOs as the organizers of the conference, as well as cooperation rendered by Iran’s organization of Environmental protection, Atomic Energy Organization of Iran and UNESCO, were instrumental beyond any doubt, in this gathering. The presence of a wide range of cancer related subjects in the panel termed as “Cancer and Air pollution”, as the first panel, was immensely welcome by the participants. This panel referred to the difficulties and sources of air pollution and its role in causing cancer as well as the solutions offered for controlling it, which can be used as a basis to influence future policies. After the panel discussion, Dr. Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iran's former ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, offered a presentation about the formation and activities of the Programme of Action for

Cancer Therapy (PACT) and the necessity for the formation of programs for cancer control and treatment at the national level with the collaboration of international organizations such as the IAEA and WHO.

He emphasized on the role of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education in this regard as well as the need to collaborate more closely with other organizations such as the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran. He also pointed out the importance of the collaboration of International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Health Organization in the cancer therapy program. Dr. Soltanieh indicated that since the focus of Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy is mostly based on radiotherapy, offered some useful related statistics in this field, and mentioned that in almost %50 of cancer cases, patients need radiotherapy for their treatment, and that in the middle and low-income countries, less than %25 of cancer patients have access to these radiotherapy services. He also mentioned that in the middle and low-income countries, millions of cancer patients would need radiotherapy services during the next 20 years and about 5000 radiotherapy devices. The goal of PACT program is to develop adequate capacity and structure for early detection, diagnosis and treatment of cancer by using radiotherapy as well as facilitate an easy access to radiotherapy services as an essential part of a multifaceted approach to cancer. He continued by stating that there is a considerable shortage of radiotherapy devices in Iran as compared to developed countries, and that for 2 to 5 million people in Iran there

is one radiotherapy device available in comparison to one device for less than half a million in developed countries. He finally pointed out the progress achieved in producing radiopharmaceuticals in Iran and their role to treat cancer patients. Dr.Soltanieh, also referred to the example of services provided by A.E.O.I regarding radiotherapy, radioisotopes production and close cooperation with the nuclear medical centres in the country. He referred to the letter sent by the H.E. Dr.Salehi, head of A.E.O.I to the H.E. President of Iran, particularly the need for integrated harmony and cooperation under the auspices of national cancer committee, and the strong determination of A.E.O.I in extending humanitarian cooperation for the control and treatment of cancer.

In the first day of the congress, the breast and smoking related cancer panels were held. At the end of that day, that coincided with the Feb 4th world cancer day, a seminar was held with participation of some recovered patients, Ministry of Health, IRIB of the Islamic Republic of Iran, officials and physicians, professionals, athletes, artist and charities active in the fight against cancer. In this congress 4 charities, 2 publication centers, 2 websites and 9 producer and journalist who were active in training and disseminating information about cancer were accordingly praised.

In the second and third days of the congress important topics such as supporting care for cancer patients, role of economic considerations and guidelines in

diagnosis and treatment of cancer, role of fundamental researches, ethical and legal considerations and role of media in prediction, early diagnosis, related social taboos and also the latest oncology achievements in diagnosis, treatment, nursing, cancer psychology and challenges were discussed in panels, speeches and workshops.

In the closing ceremony, Dr. Hashemi, Health and Medical Education minister, and Dr. Shahriyari, Head of the Majlis Health Commission, delivered speeches about problems in cancer diagnosis and treatment. Then, they appreciated the work of 12 pioneers and researchers in the field of research, training and care of cancer cases by presenting them with "National Awards for fight against cancer".

The scientific secretary of the congress in a closing speech delivered a text concerning the role and achievements of national cancer committee and other organizations affiliated to the Ministry of Health.

This congress was an example of active participation by policy making organizations, scientific and social centers for discussing an important health issue, and in case of follow up of discussed issues and continue the collective constructive models presented, the gathering could provide fruitful outcome in future for the benefit of cancer patients and population in general.