

Don't Underestimate Saudi Women, Says Samia Al-Amoudi

SOURCE: Hassna'a Mokhtar, Arab News

JEDDAH, 28 March 2008 — Several women attended a second workshop on breast cancer awareness run by Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation at Dohat Al-Jazeera School yesterday.

A group of 15 women — including representatives from the health sector, social activists and breast cancer survivors — took part in five modules covering community profiles, development of volunteers and organizations, awareness and education, and fundraising and advocacy.

"I want you to leave class today knowing everything about gathering information and field surveys so that you can design your own strategic plans and community profiles," said trainer Fatimah Al-Qarazi.

"Our goal is to set plans for awareness purposes. Nothing is done randomly. You have to know all details," she added.

Speaking about participants' cooperation and responsiveness, Dr. Samia Al-Amoudi, member of the Saudi Cancer Society (SCS) and a breast cancer survivor, told Arab News that no one should ever dismiss Saudi women. "Don't ever underestimate Saudi women. Just give them the chance to be part of any work, and wait and see," said Al-Amoudi.

She said participants' feedback to the course, which is being held in Jeddah, Riyadh, Qassim and Dammam, was overwhelming. She emphasized the importance of human interaction to build relations with other nations and countries.

"Especially in the fields of medicine and health," she said, stressing that the US-Middle East Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research has strengthened Saudi-US ties.

Al-Qarazi presented a plan that Najlaa, one of the participants, had worked on as part of the first module explaining the steps she had adopted from the module. Najlaa and her colleagues Lulwa and Dania are members of Al-Eman Cancer Society of Jeddah and were nominated to attend the workshops.

"Being part of society did us a favor in implementing what we're learning by contacting other local cancer societies," said Dania. "The workshop has given us a better understanding on how to start awareness campaigns. We're still at the beginning and we definitely need time, effort and support," she added.

Focusing on a new dimension in breast cancer awareness, Al-Amoudi is now trying to integrate breast care awareness into the Kingdom's education system. "I hope the Ministry of Education adopts my idea. I'm willing to write the curricula so that it suits different age levels," she said.

"Let us work together on teaching the new generation. I would love to see younger people doing more for breast cancer patients," she added.

In January 2008, Howaida Darwish, member of KFSH-D Breast Care Program and SCS, and Al-Qarazi underwent an eight-day workshop for breast cancer awareness in Dallas, US.

Darwish said that the Susan G. Komen for the Cure exposed them to 25 years of the Komen experience in dealing with breast cancer. She added that it was a challenge for them to tailor the same tools to suit the Saudi environment.

"It's encouraging to hear participants' feedback and to be able to use adult learning techniques creatively to train them. I'm a believer in awareness and I gave a promise in Dallas at the Susan G. Komen headquarters. I've realized the seriousness of breast cancer problems and I'm doing this for myself, my daughter, my family and my generation," said Darwish.

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