

# *Breast cancer patient care: A priority in Cuba*

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By María Josefina Arce

Worldwide, breast cancer is the most widespread cancer. It represents almost 13% of all new cases of cancer detected each year in the world and among the different types of this disease it is the most common cause of death in the Americas.

In Cuba, this type of ailment also has a high incidence. That is why its attention occupies an essential place in the National Program for Integral Cancer Control, through which education, prevention and health promotion actions are carried out.

The specialists point out that early detection can modify the prognosis of the disease, increasing the chances of cure.

For that reason, self-examination is promoted through educational campaigns in the media, which are accompanied by the work carried out by doctors and nurses in the community, an essential link in the

Cuban health system.

The country has highly qualified, experienced and responsible personnel who guarantee assistance to patients with breast cancer, which is generally associated with women, but can also affect men, although in a much lower percentage.

The Cuban health system has never failed to provide care to these people, even in the most complex conditions such as the COVID 19 pandemic, which affected the whole world and which Cuba had to face in the midst of a tightening of the U.S. blockade.

In spite of this difficult situation and the fact that many professionals had to join the battle against the virus, classification consultations were maintained at all times for those who were referred from the primary health level and care for patients already treated but with some kind of relapse of the disease.

But it is good to know that the criminal economic siege has a strong impact on the treatment to be applied to these people; many pharmaceutical companies do not respond to the request of the Greater Antilles for a drug. That is the case of Pfizer, which never answered the Cuban request for Palbociclib for the treatment of hormone-sensitive metastatic breast cancer.

In addition to the sustained attention and constant check-up by specialists, there have been initiatives aimed at supporting these people, such as the Alas por la vida (Wings for Life) project. This is a support group for women who have undergone breast cancer surgery.

It was created at the proposal of professionals from the well-known Manuel Fajardo Hospital in Havana, and it has become a space not only for the operated women, but also for their relatives, who can learn more about the subject and contribute to improve the quality of life of these people.

Cuba, in the midst of the lack of resources, makes a remarkable effort not to neglect the care of people with breast cancer. Every day our specialists fight a battle against this disease and each cured patient is a victory in favor of life.

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