

## ***CANCER CAN ONLY BE ELIMINATED IF ONE KNOWS HOW TO DEAL WITH IT.***

### ***Amat Al-Rahman Al-Afour***

Between the tides of pain and the tides of hope, this was the first stage of Safwan's life, when he was informed in a moment perhaps worse than in his life that he was suffering from pancreatic cancer. Tomorrow, a disease will disrupt his life and deprive him of his happiness. It will disturb him every night, between a day full of physical pain and a night where thoughts wake up every time he closes his eyes so that nightmares invade his reality and creep into his imagination.

Safwan Youssef Al-Wajeeh, 42 years old, from Bani Youssef district in Taiz governorate, received the news of his pancreatic cancer as a shocking shock to him and his family, as cancer in Yemeni society is synonymous with death, and indeed, it is a death accompanied by a lot of pain over a long period. Safwan recalls that moment, saying: "When the doctor told me that I had a malignant tumor, I was terrified, and I thought that I was going to die. I was shocked, and I was afraid of this shock for a week. I couldn't believe it, I was in a state of post-traumatic denial. I just didn't want to believe the news."

He had his share of sadness as well, as thinking about death and separation from family and loved ones aroused sadness, but his desire to live eventually overcame all those concerns of fear, panic, sadness, and grief...and he soon began seeking the opportunity of a renewed life.

### ***A Turning Point in the Treatment of Cancer***

"In the beginning, the doctor informed me that I had to undergo surgery to remove the tumor, and I began to feel that my breathing was running out and that my life had almost ended," says Safwan, who regained his health after the surgery that the doctor had decided upon. Then he added, "I was trying as much as I could not to think about any symptom." Bad or failure keeps me in the cycle of illness or speeds up my departure." After twenty-three days in the hospital, where he underwent the operation, the frightening surprise and the biggest shock was that the operation failed, as the tumor, which was 18 centimeters in size, could not be removed, and to save his life he needed chemotherapy.

That moment was frustrating for Safwan, his hopes of recovery were dashed, and it was so hard on him that he would never be able to forget it. The idea of undergoing chemotherapy and living at its mercy, of losing his hair, of his face turning pale and his body emaciated, did not cross his mind or occupy any space in his thoughts. All he was thinking about was overcoming the disease and enjoying his life with his family and friends, so he started chemotherapy. He tried hard to deal with his illness positively. He says, "I began to consider this disease like any other disease that needs follow-up and treatment. I removed the idea of death and defeat from my mind. My psychological state is constantly improving.

During the treatment period, Safwan would spend three days in the hospital and then return home for two days. Sometimes, he would take the treatment with him to work, and everything was smooth for him. The culture of death and despair in treating the disease was not one of his fears, as it was the reason for the deterioration of the condition of many patients. On the contrary, Safwan would listen to many people who told him that cancer is a fatal disease and that no one survives it, but he would respond to them with confidence that he would survive.

### ***A patient Helps Patients Get Treatment for Cancer.***

This confidence that Safwan had, pushed him to become one of those who provide advice and lead awareness campaigns for cancer patients, especially children, and he was the reason for their improvement. Safwan says that the knowledge of dealing with the disease that he gained from the media was the inspiration that led him to become a guide for cancer patients.

TV channels such as "Al-Saeeda Channel" were a good awareness destination for Safwan, in addition to his intensified follow-up of recent articles and specialist channels on YouTube. "I followed many guidance and awareness channels about the disease on YouTube and specialist channels, such as the channel (Sutour) by Dr. Sameh Hashed. This awareness made a big difference in my thinking and feelings. I had a friend who had this disease before, and when I learned about his illness, I cried in despair because I was convinced that he would soon die. When he died, I was certain that the disease was fatal, and when I was infected with it, I was convinced that I would meet the same fate. I am very grateful for this awareness that I received, as it not only made me live my life normally but also pushed me to overcome it and help others to do so."

### ***From Denial to Awareness***

In the southern part of Yemen, specifically the city of Aden, Sarah Abdul Rashid, who is forty years old, received the news of her cancer in a state of complete denial.

Sarah recalls that moment, which was shocking and hurtful to her, saying: "I did not want to believe it, it took a long time until I was certain that I had the disease, I felt broken and defeated, and I was overcome by a state of continuous crying. The beginning was very difficult, for a long time I was unable to face the reality that I was on the path to death." Sarah faced severe financial difficulties. She did not have the money to get a better chance for treatment, saying: "What destroyed my psyche the most since receiving the news of my cancer was my financial inability, and the connection of every effort and treatment provided by doctors to save me with the amount of money I had. It was terrifying, I felt like I was facing a fierce battle alone."

Sarah did not surrender to circumstances, so she decided to educate herself about her disease. She read about cancer with interest. "The only way to end my battle with cancer was to learn about it. What is cancer, and how can it be defeated? Since then, I have calmed down and become less emotional. I realized that I could fight the disease. I have not left a book, article, or website that talked about cancer and fighting it without reading from it. I searched on Google and followed the stories of inspiring men and women who overcame the disease on YouTube. I started following the advice and nutritional and exercise programs that they offered, and they were very useful to me.

Sarah says, "After five years of treatment, I have become an inspiration to many cancer patients and their families. I now receive many messages from cancer patients, and I work to educate others not to be afraid of the disease. I publish many videos on social media platforms to educate people on how to deal with it," Sarah says. Sarah, who hopes that the cost of treating the disease will become less, says, "I would like to advise cancer patients; that a person is his doctor, and his strength and weakness are in his hands after God, and everyone around him is just supplements and help."

### ***A Message to Cancer Patients***

The stories of Safwan and Sarah show that willpower and faith can be powerful motivators in the face of health challenges. But more important is awareness, and the confident mental foundations that refute the idea that cancer is an invincible killer.

Patients face great difficulties, but hope is always there, and awareness and education about cancer must be intensified, and those infected with it must be targeted.

According to the World Health Organization report for 2020, about 35,000 people in Yemen suffer from cancer, while 11,000 new cases are diagnosed annually. In 2016, many cancer treatment centers were closed due to the war and shortages of health personnel, medicines, and equipment, which led to increased waiting periods for treatment as patients found themselves forced to travel from their governorates to available centers to receive life-saving treatment, otherwise, thousands of them may face the risk of inevitable death due to not receiving the necessary medical care.

### ***Cooperation Between Health Authorities and the Media***

Hanan Nageeb, Human Resources Officer at the National Cancer Foundation, stated that the media contributes mainly to community awareness about cancer. The media's contribution reaches about 80% of the foundation's media plans.

These efforts aim to reach population centers in their places of residence, providing them with information about types of cancer and methods of prevention.. methods of early detection, the importance of periodic examination, and early detection when any symptoms appear.. in addition to encouraging exercise, which is one of the most important

means of prevention.. and spreading awareness messages through visual, audio, and electronic print media.

Nageeb stresses the importance of the method of conveying information and choosing the most appropriate means for each target group. She also pointed out the need to integrate media outlets and exploit the advantages of each means to achieve effective access to the target group.

One of the most prominent successful media campaigns that contributed to raising awareness about cancer was events related to international days such as February 4, which is World Cancer Day. Patients were involved in community activities and made aware of their ability to lead a normal life and their ability to produce, as well as the World No Tobacco Day “Smoking” on May 31, and World Breast Cancer Awareness Month that targets the community with the importance of early detection of cancer.

As for how to improve future campaigns to make them more effective in spreading awareness about cancer, Najeeb suggests several methods, including integrating efforts with local authorities in partnership with service and non-service facilities, in addition to creating media content for awareness that suits the target audience in cities and villages, encouraging creators to produce awareness messages through modern means such as TikTok and Instagram, and working on partnerships with national and civil media outlets to allocate space for awareness and use celebrities to deliver awareness messages effectively.

### ***The Role of the Media in Cancer Awareness***

Media professional Saddam Hassan noted the importance of the media in educating the public about cancer. He explained that raising community awareness is one of the main tasks of these media outlets in light of the alarming increase in cases of this disease in Yemen. The topic of awareness of the dangers of cancer and methods of prevention must be a high priority for the media, whether official or civil.

He added that cancer, which kills tens of thousands annually, requires concerted media efforts and increasing awareness messages through various media outlets. This media role is not limited to raising people's awareness of the risks of the disease but also includes supporting patients and alleviating their suffering.

It is important to raise awareness about early detection and periodic examinations, in addition to changing some bad behaviors and eating habits, which will contribute to containing this disease and reducing the number of infected cases annually, according to Saddam.

Hassan pointed out that the media plays a vital role in confronting misinformation and myths related to cancer, as it provides facts and scientific information from reliable sources based on doctors and specialists, with the need to integrate traditional media with modern media that may be a cause of the spread of rumors and misinformation. Hassan

stressed the importance of good planning when implementing awareness campaigns, with a focus on exploiting modern means due to their widespread and great impact. Most media outlets in Yemen lack effective strategies targeting the most vulnerable groups. The frightening increase in cases of infection, according to official statistics, reflects a failure in the performance of the media to deliver the awareness message to these groups, especially in light of the difficult economic conditions facing the country. This requires adopting new means and methods to reach these groups, as it seems that cancer has become outside the circle of interest of most media outlets, as it is allocated small spaces and is treated as a marginal topic. The current situation requires the need to reconsider how to address cancer issues, to enhance awareness and community participation in confronting this health challenge.

### ***The Role of Al-Saeeda Channel in Raising Awareness of Cancer***

Saddam confirmed that Al-Saeeda Channel is always committed to allocating space within its programs to raise awareness of cancer, as it highlights the suffering of patients and contributes to mobilizing community support for them in their battle against this malignant disease.

These efforts are evident in the programs produced by the Cancer Foundation annually, in addition to broadcasting awareness flashes and television seminars. The channel also covers all events and activities related to cancer, which reflects its commitment to promoting awareness and community participation.

### ***The Development of Cancer Awareness Programs***

Al Jazeera correspondent in Yemen, Yasser Hassan, believes that visual media plays a prominent role in promoting cancer awareness programs and that television and platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and the X platform are among the most prominent tools used in this field.

Hassan explained that visual media enjoys great interaction with the audience, which makes it an effective means of conveying awareness messages. It is difficult to identify a specific program or media outlet, but programs that highlight the experiences of survivors of the disease have a noticeable impact.

He also pointed out the importance of presenting the stories of these survivors and how they were able to live with the disease, in addition to shedding light on the psychological state of the patient and its role in confronting the disease, and that some patients may face psychological difficulties that lead to serious relapses, while others can adapt to their situation, which enhances their morale and their ability to face challenges.

The report's author conducted a survey with 80 media professionals, activists, and community activists about the effectiveness of the media in dealing with cancer.

The results showed that 46.3% considered the effectiveness of the media to be weak, compared to 32.5% who saw it as average. 16.3% saw it as effective, while 5% said it was very effective.

The results showed that 47.5% of the participants believed that the type of media content that should be focused on to raise awareness about cancer is awareness campaigns via social media, while 20% suggested success stories of cancer patients, 17.5% suggested medical and educational information, and 15% suggested interviews with specialized doctors.