

Breast cancer incidence among Iraqi women profiled

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Breast cancer continues to rise in Iraq, and scientists have established the Iraqi National Cancer Research Program to better understand the underlying molecular and environmental causes in an effort to curb the incidence of cancer.

"Breast cancer is the most common type of malignancy recorded in the cancer registries of almost all countries within the Eastern Mediterranean Region. In Iraq, the continuous rise in the incidence rate is associated with an obvious trend to affect [premenopausal women](#)," said Nada A.S. Alwan, M.D., Ph.D., director of the National Breast Cancer Research Unit at Baghdad University Medical College and the executive director of the newly established Iraqi National Cancer Research Program.

Alwan presented early data at the second AACR Dead Sea International Conference on Advances in Cancer Research: From the Laboratory to the Clinic, held March 7-10, 2010.

The Iraqi National Cancer Research Program was organized by the Iraqi minister of higher education and scientific research in 2009 in collaboration with the common secretariat for the Council of Ministers and the Iraqi Parliament.

"This project includes within its objectives comprehensive epidemiologic studies on risk factors of the main encountered cancers in [Iraq](#), with a focus on the characteristics and behaviors of cancer in

patients inhabiting different geographic areas," said Alwan.

The current study focused on 721 of 5,044 [women](#) who complained of breast lumps later diagnosed as cancer. Approximately one-third of the diagnosed patients were between 40 and 49 years old; 71.9 percent came from urban areas and 75 percent were married.

History of lactation was reported in 63.1 percent of the women and 29 percent had taken hormone therapy. A family history of breast cancer was reported in 16.2 percent of cases.

Although 90.6 percent of women detected a lump on self-examination, only 32 percent sought medical advice within the first month. Because of this, 47 percent of them presented with advanced stage breast cancer, either stage III or IV cancer. The main histological type was invasive ductal carcinoma of grade 2 in 56.6 percent and grade 3 in 39.9 percent. Estrogen-receptor positive tumors were noted in 65.1 percent of the cases and progesterone-receptor positive tumors were noted in 45.1 percent of the cases.

"We are currently planning to use this information to compare the demographic characteristics, clinicopathological presentations and management outcomes of [breast cancer](#) patients within selected countries in the Middle East," said Alwan.

Provided by American Association for Cancer Research

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