

Regional breast cancer guidelines needed in the Middle East and North Africa

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Researchers surveying breast cancer management in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have identified significant barriers to applying international guidelines in this area, and are calling for localised best practice.

MedicalSurveys-17 Research Group, a group of young oncologists working in different institutes across the Middle East, have established the Middle East and North Africa Breast Cancer Guidelines Project.

Surveying breast [cancer](#) management in the MENA [region](#), these researchers have identified barriers to applying international guidelines to their unique setting. The results of their survey have today been published in the open-access medical journal *ecancermedicalscience*.

Whilst international cancer management guidelines are considered best practice, the study shows that they do not reflect specific challenges faced in the MENA region. These challenges include younger age at presentation, lack of national breast screening programmes, lack of reliable data registries, and socioeconomic factors.

The need for specific regional guidelines for the management of breast cancer was agreed upon by 90.6% of survey responders.

"One of the main factors affecting [breast cancer patients](#) and their outcome is the availability of facilities," says corresponding author Dr Adel Aref, a medical oncologist and PhD student at the University of

Adelaide, Australia. "Regional guidelines should be developed with an understanding of available resources and needs."

There are a number of cancer societies in the MENA region, but they're missing a unifying effort to improve breast cancer management in the MENA region as a whole, says Dr Aref. That's why he conducted this survey of healthcare professionals to determine the best way to start.

"There must be more concern on how to give breast cancer patients the best outcome when there is a shortage of care facilities," says Dr Aref. "Clinical trials should be designed for specific problems that we face with our patients in the MENA region - they should consider cost-effectiveness, as well as trying to improve outcomes from limited facilities. That's the cornerstone to improve breast cancer outcome in these areas."

The authors suggest that the existing European example of collaborative work in cancer research could be adapted in the MENA region. Working groups and societies would provide one method of gathering knowledge, which could be supported by fundraising and continuing medical education.

Dr Aref stresses that his findings should be built upon as part of a collaborative, region-wide effort.

"We do think that the improvement in [breast](#) cancer [management](#) and in [breast cancer](#) research in the MENA region will only be achieved by a strong and dedicated collaboration between all the societies, and individuals in the MENA region."

More information: Reham Fayed et al, Do we need regional guidelines for breast cancer management in the MENA region? MENA Breast Cancer Guidelines project, *ecancermedicalscience* (2017). [DOI:](#)

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