



Huda is a nurse in the cancer outpatient department at Al Rantisi Hospital in Gaza City. She has been working with cancer patients for 15 years. □

The work is not easy and cancer departments in Gaza face severe shortages of drugs and supplies, as well as lack of equipment. In November 2019, almost half (48%) of essential drugs stocks were at zero stock in Gaza’s Central Drugs Store. For chemotherapy drugs, the situation is even worse with 63% of essential drugs at zero stock.

Huda comments, “In addition to suffering the effects of cancer, patients suffer a lack of services, shortages of drugs and denial of their permits to reach services outside Gaza. We don’t have enough psychological support services or intensive care beds. When a woman has an appointment to get chemotherapy and the drug isn’t available, she’s disappointed and upset. It affects us as caregivers as well. Patients referred for care out of Gaza are also denied permits to exit. We feel frustrated and helpless to watch as a patient’s health deteriorates. Chemotherapy drugs require a specific schedule according to the treatment plan and delays mean worse outcomes for patients.»

Cancer patients require care outside the clinic, and Huda shares her personal number so that they have someone to turn to in moments of need or crisis. She contacts local societies to link patients into the mental health and psychosocial support services that are available.□

Huda has her own personal experience of cancer, after her husband was diagnosed with testicular cancer over ten years ago. Her personal experience has given her insights into the need for strengthening psychological support for cancer patients and their families. “We were very shocked, but I tried to support my husband and to fight the battle with him. I’ve lived what it means to have a relative fighting cancer and I know the suffering patients go through during their journeys to get treatment. Especially when they have to reach health services outside Gaza.”

Huda is 38-years-old and has three children. She lives with her husband and children in Gaza City. She reflects on the crisis facing the health sector in Gaza, “We are living in a very hard situation. I always dream that cancer patients will have a specialized hospital here and that all the services they need will be available. Patients and health workers deserve a better environment. We deserve our rights.”

Related links: □

[WHO monthly reports on referral of patients from the Gaza Strip, November 2019&nbsp;](#)

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