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In many countries, clinicians, scientists and patients involved in breast cancer diagnosis and treatment have formed cooperative groups to improve breast cancer treatment guidelines. These guidelines were prepared by the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre, a WHO collaborating centre for cancer prevention and care. The idea was conceived at the Consultation on Early Detection and Screening of Breast Cancer, held at the Regional Office in Cairo in 2002, during which a framework for the guidelines was prepared by participants. Subsequently, in January 2004, a Task Force for Developing Breast Cancer Prevention, Screening and Management Guidelines was established at a meeting at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre in Riyadh. The members of the task force developed the guidelines with the consensus of all contributors. The task force took into consideration the cost of treatment and factors common to most countries in the Region, such as limited resources and a paucity of specialized cancer centers, without compromising the efficacy of the guidelines.

The guidelines are aimed at oncologists, internists, secondary and tertiary hospitals, ministries of health and other health decision-makers. The purpose is to provide answers to the practical questions involved in decision-making about day-to-day management of breast cancer. The paradigms that underpin them are also outlined, promoting evidence-based and cost-effective interventions. It is hoped that these guidelines will support the choices made by both health care providers and patients.

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