



10-year-old Yahya, from eastern Ghouta, after receiving treatment in a WHO supported hospital in Damascus 19 December 2018 – A generous donation of US\$ 1 000 000 from the State of Kuwait has brought a glimmer of hope to cancer patients in Syria at a time when public health services have been badly disrupted.

Before the conflict began cancer treatment services in Syria were provided free of charge in public health care facilities. As a direct result of the crisis many patients' treatments have been severely compromised. WHO assessment of cancer care services in 8 hospitals in different governorates, carried out in 2016, revealed acute shortages of specialized staff, equipment and cancer care medicines in all 8 facilities.

Using the donation from the State of Kuwait, WHO has procured essential cancer medicines and supplies and distributed them to the country's main hospitals.

“WHO has worked with the oncology units in Syria’s public referral hospitals to develop a list of high-value, specific cancer medicines,” said Ms Elizabeth Hoff, the WHO representative in Syria.

“Through this carefully tailored approach and close collaboration with hospital staff, WHO has been able to procure enough medicines to cover 40 000 treatment courses and help fill critical gaps in cancer care.”

Oncology unit staff at the Children’s Hospital in Damascus say the medicines are already making a difference to patients and their families.

Ten-year old Yahya from Ghouta is one of the patients benefitting from medicines purchased using the contribution from Kuwait. Yahya was diagnosed with leukaemia more than a year ago but the specialized treatment he needed was difficult to obtain, and unaffordable for his family. His condition worsened significantly and he began bleeding heavily.

A multi-disciplinary team of paediatricians and oncologists is now following Yahya closely and making sure he receives the treatments and medicines he needs. The hospital’s specialists say his condition has already improved, though a complete cure will take more time.

Yahya’s family would never have been able to afford the cost of the medical care he requires.

“I am so grateful to the Kuwaiti government for helping us in our time of need,” says Yahya’s mother.

The Children’s Hospital in Damascus is the only paediatric hospital in the country. Its overwhelmed staff struggle to cope with patients coming from all over the country.

“We receive huge numbers of patients from all governorates,” says Dr Maha Raslan, a hospital oncologist. “The contribution from Kuwait has made it possible for us to treat more cancer

patients and help alleviate their suffering, but it covers only a fraction of our needs.”

WHO expresses its gratitude to the State of Kuwait for its contribution which has had a direct, immediate effect on the health outcomes of some of the poorest, most vulnerable families in Syria.

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