

Healthcare Support Remains Strong For Singaporeans With Advanced Breast Cancer, But Patients Call For Greater Disease Education, Survey Finds

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- *The survey aims to better understand the lives of women living with advanced breast cancer and seeks to provide support to these women around the globe.¹*
- *With new and better treatments, patients with advanced breast cancer are now living longer and better than before*

Singapore, October 21, 2019 – Commissioned by Novartis Oncology, The Count Us, Know Us, Join Us Advanced Breast Cancer (ABC) survey today unveils valuable insights that put a spotlight on patients' perspectives as we honor Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The survey, which was set up to better understand the lives of women living with ABC, reveals that Singaporean patients are well-supported by their doctors and healthcare networks, but still feel isolated from the wider community¹.

ABC is a stage 4 or metastatic disease and remains as the number one cause of death for women diagnosed with cancers in Singapore². Every month, about 800 women are diagnosed with breast cancer, accounting for nearly 30 per cent of incident cancers in females. Within the breast cancer population, one in 10 would be found with late stage ABC at the time of diagnosis². Fortunately, with medical advancements, at least 20 per cent of ABC patients can now live more than three years². Given the longer survival rates, it is important that ABC patients are receiving sufficient support at every stage of their treatment or recovery journey.

Strong Support from Healthcare Networks

In light of this, the survey, which was supported by AIN Society, Breast Cancer Foundation, CanHOPE and Singapore Cancer Society, reported comforting results that highlight the healthcare system's strong support for affected women in Singapore. More specifically, nearly all (>92%) sufferers feel well-supported by their doctors, nurses and therapists, and more than eight in 10 women in Singapore are satisfied with their interactions with healthcare professionals (HCPs) involved in their treatment process. Additionally, nine in 10 have reported that communication with their HCPs has improved their outlook.

A/Prof Lee Soo Chin, Head and Senior Consultant of the Department of Haematology-Oncology at the National University Cancer Institute, Singapore, shared, "With new and better treatments, patients with advanced breast cancer are now living longer and better than before. This is in large part attributed to medical breakthroughs made possible by the generous participation of past patients in clinical trials such that new drugs can be tested and approved. Some of my patients with advanced breast cancer continue to lead an independent and active lifestyle, with others integrating back into the workforce to contribute to society."

The Need to Raise Awareness and Bridge the Gap in Disease Education

While support from their healthcare network remains strong, the survey, however, also pointed out that

patients feel the need to enhance the public's understanding of ABC. Nearly half (44%) feel that there is a lack of disease awareness and understanding amongst the public, and the same amount reported a difficulty in finding support groups for their disease. Additionally, 3 in 4 patients desire more time to discuss their needs with their HCPs during visits, and more than eight in 10 want their HCPs to address their emotional needs as well.

In response to these concerns, Novartis Singapore will be launching a unique educational tool, called "Let's Talk ABC", to bolster HCPs' communication with their patients. Leveraging the power of VR technology, screen-based trainings and insights from patients and physicians, this innovative interactive tool will be unveiled in the upcoming ESMO Asia in Singapore in November 2019.

Patients also put high value on having accurate and readily available resources to help them navigate through the clutter of existing information, especially when it comes to understanding their complex disease. 8 in 10 women believe that it is important to have easily accessible information about ABC and treatment options used by the medical community. However, the survey highlighted that nearly half (48%) feel that the current information does not address their needs, and six in 10 feel overwhelmed by available information. Additionally, almost one-third (32%) finds difficulty in obtaining information on their disease.

To bridge the gap in disease education, Novartis Singapore in collaboration with Singapore Society of Oncology will be launching an advanced breast cancer patient booklet, in a joint effort to provide clear, accurate and comprehensible information about the disease. The educational booklet will serve as a guide to help patients better understand and cope with their disease, including their treatment and recovery journey.

Novartis Singapore will also be fronting a joint training with patient organizations next year at the Asia Pacific Breast Cancer Summit in March 2020. Based on insights from the survey, this session will equip breast cancer patient organisations with more information and resources to strengthen support for patient members in Singapore.

"This survey has revealed valuable perspectives of ABC patients in Singapore which allow us to get a better understanding of their needs. With these insights, we are determined to work closely with support organizations in Singapore to bridge existing gaps faced by ABC patients. We look forward to partnering with patient organizations and physicians to ensure that all women, regardless of age or stages of their disease, are empowered with community support and the information they need to cope with the diagnosis and treatment," shared Itsaraet Gosriwatana, the Oncology General Manager of Novartis Singapore.

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About AIN Society

Ain Society, an affiliation of National Council of Social Service, started with humble beginnings 18 years ago. With 12 activists gathered for a common cause to do good for the community, Ain Society was established and registered with the Registrar of Societies on 10th October 2000. Ain Society has held an IPC (Institute of Public Character) status since 1st January 2008. In 2012, Serenity Social Service Centre was set up with the focus of helping those who have been afflicted with cancer. The centre provides an avenue of solace to those affected through guidance in emotional, spiritual and psycho-social support. It aims to serve all races and religion in giving support to cancer-stricken patients through the activities that we conduct in line with our Mission – Looking with Our Hearts, Filling Lives with Hope.

For more information, please visit <https://www.ainsociety.org.sg/>. For updates on AIN society's latest and upcoming activities, follow them on Facebook at @ainsociety.

About Breast Cancer Foundation

Breast Cancer Foundation (BCF) is a non-profit organization with the mission to eradicate breast cancer as a life-threatening disease. Set up in 1997, BCF is committed to raising awareness about breast cancer through talks, events and publications that advocate early detection through regular screening, as well as supporting survivors and their families through various befriending and training activities. As one of the few advocacy groups in the world with a Men's Support League that was integrated with Caregiver Support Group in year 2017, BCF aims to encourage greater male participation in society's fight against this affliction.

For more information, please visit www.bcf.org.sg. For updates on BCF's latest work and initiatives, follow BCF at @bcf.pink (Facebook) and @bcfsg (Instagram).

About CanHOPE

CanHOPE is a non-profit cancer counselling & support service initiated by Parkway Cancer Centre. Their mission is to provide holistic, quality and personalised cancer care and support, and to advocate early detection and awareness of cancer through educational opportunities. As part of the holistic approach towards cancer treatment, CanHOPE works closely with the medical & allied health professionals, offering a wide range of resources & information about cancer in helping patients & their caregivers to make effective, informed decisions in their treatment journey. Through CanHOPE, they strive to inspire hope in our patients and their loved ones by helping them better cope with cancer. Counselling, nutritional advice, rehabilitation, education, care coordination and support group activities are the core of what they do.

For more information, please visit <http://www.CanHOPE.org>. For updates on CanHOPE's latest work and initiatives, follow them at @ParkwayCancerCentre (Facebook).

About Singapore Cancer Society

Established in 1964, Singapore Cancer Society is a self-funded voluntary welfare organisation which provides patient care services to needy cancer patients through its welfare, hospice home care, cancer treatment subsidy and rehabilitation support programmes. In addition, the Society also provides free cancer screening services and promotes cancer awareness and prevention through its public education and community outreach programmes.

For more information, please visit www.singaporecancersociety.org.sg.

About Novartis in Advanced Breast Cancer

Novartis tackles breast cancer with superior science, collaboration and a passion for transforming patient care. We have taken a bold approach to our research by including patient populations often neglected in clinical trials, identifying new pathways or mutations that may play a role in disease progression and developing therapies that not only maintain, but also improve, quality of life for patients. Our priority over the past 30 years and today is to deliver treatments proven to improve and extend lives for those diagnosed with advanced breast cancer.

For further information consult full prescribing information.

About Novartis Global

Novartis is reimagining medicine to improve and extend people's lives. As a leading global medicines company, we use innovative science and digital technologies to create transformative treatments in areas of great medical need. In our quest to find new medicines, we consistently rank among the world's top companies investing in research and development. Novartis products reach more than 750 million people

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About the Count Us, Know Us, Join Us campaign

The Advanced Breast Cancer community is one that stretches far and wide. And we understand that people with advanced or metastatic stages of breast cancer may have different physical and emotional needs than people with earlier stages of breast cancer. The Count Us, Know Us, Join Us mission is to recognize and support those who are living with advanced or metastatic breast cancer, as well as their caregivers, supporters, friends, and family members. The Count Us, Know Us, Join Us global survey was first launched in 2013 to better understand the lives of women living with advanced breast cancer. The objective of this survey was to explore the relationships and support networks of women living with ABC; identify the issues and concerns women living with ABC; and, identify sources of information and the types of information, or lack thereof, that are most important to these women.

In 2018, Novartis expanded the survey in Asia and into the Middle East to further bring attention to the needs of the ABC community. Over a period of seven months, a total of 381 women aged 21 and above diagnosed with breast cancer that has spread to distant parts of the body beyond the breast completed the survey in 7 countries – Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Hong Kong, India, Singapore and Taiwan. This study, commissioned by Novartis Oncology, will be used to continue the global Count Us, Know Us, Join Us campaign, aimed at understanding the lives of women with advanced breast cancer and to provide support to these women around the globe.

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1. The Harris Poll, 2018. Count Us, Know Us, Join Us: Advanced Breast Cancer Global Survey Summary Report. (Data on file)
2. Singapore Cancer Registry Annual Registry Report 2015. Last accessed on July 2019.
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