

Our Correspondent

AKUH, Patients Behbud Society collaborate with pharma firm to financially support cancer patients

The Aga Khan University Hospital (AKUH) and the Patients Behbud Society for the AKUH (PBS) have entered into a partnership with a pharmaceutical company to provide cancer patients with limited financial means access to targeted therapy treatment.

The partnership was announced during an official signing ceremony held at the university hospital premises in Karachi. Under this partnership, Eli Lilly Pakistan Pvt. Ltd. will support 60 per cent of the cost of Lilly's medicine for gastric, lung & colorectal cancer of all eligible patients from the AKUH.

According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer, every year, over 100,000 people are diagnosed with various types of cancers in Pakistan, with breast, lung and colorectal cancers being the most commonly diagnosed in the country.

The AKUH's Patient Welfare Programme and the PBS support for Zakat Mustehiq patients will cover the remaining cost of treatment. This initiative will provide many patients with hope for treatment and will improve their quality of life.

Shagufta Hassan, CEO, AKUH, Ammad Siddiqui, GM Lilly, and Nadeem Mustafa Khan, president, PBS, signed and exchanged the memorandum of understanding. Other senior officials from both sides were also present to witness the ceremony.

Siddiqui said, "Lilly has a presence in Pakistan that goes back over half a century, and we remain committed to bringing our innovations for patients in Pakistan.

"Lilly has always pushed the boundaries of science to make conditions that are incurable today, treatable tomorrow, with a focus on five therapeutic areas – diabetes, cancer, immunology, pain and neurodegeneration. We are committed to bringing our innovative treatments to people who need them by ensuring patients have access to our medicines. - a commitment that is exemplified by this very initiative," he added.

Speaking at the ceremony, Shagufta Hassan said, "AKUH endeavours to provide access to our health care services for needy patients who may not, on account of financial constraints, be able to afford our regular hospital charges. Patients who receive financial support receive the same level of care as all other patients. Last year alone we spent almost PKR 3 billion on welfare programmes. Our oncologists and other experts aim to provide the best possible treatment to patients and we plan to increase our capacity to treat more patients."

Nadeem Mustafa Khan appreciated Lilly's support and said, "It is indeed heartening to see our partners like Eli Lilly coming forward to help needy patients by supporting for expensive cancer drugs. The more support we collect, it will enable us to serve more patients with affordability challenges, with ever more barakaat to the givers of this charity."

Dr Adnan A Jabbar, associate professor and section head of medical oncology, AKUH, said, "Disparity in care is a major challenge across the world with cost of treatment a major contributor in low middle-income countries like Pakistan. Program like this partnership with AKUH & Lilly, helps cancer doctors reduce this gap in treatment outcome by providing highly effective drugs for their patients who may otherwise would not have been able to benefit from them."