

# HOPE

Autumn Edition 2020



Imran Khan  
Cancer Appeal Inc.



## FIGHTING ON TWO FRONTS CANCER CARE CONTINUES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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## **FIGHTING ON TWO FRONTS: CANCER CARE CONTINUES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

According to the World Health Organization, most people recover from COVID-19 infection without needing hospital treatment, but some become seriously ill and develop difficulty in breathing. Older people, as well as those with other illnesses, such as high blood pressure, heart or lung conditions, diabetes, or cancer are at a higher risk of becoming very unwell if infected with COVID-19 and need to be protected from this new virus as far as is possible.

The first cases of COVID-19 began to surface in Pakistan towards the end of February 2020. Numbers climbed steadily, thereafter and we also started to see our own cancer patients coming to our hospitals with COVID-19 infection. In March 2020, we implemented a series of measures designed to prepare our facilities to be able to manage not only the potentially huge number of our own cancer patients infected with COVID-19, but also members of staff affected by this disease. At this time of national crisis, we felt that we ought also to be willing to contribute to the wider effort and so we made a strategic decision to open our facilities to anyone in need of treatment for coronavirus infection, with the very important proviso that our own cancer patients would have first right to these facilities, with any excess capacity being made available to non-Shaukat Khanum patients. We also decided that, as with cancer treatment, all care provided to these non-Shaukat Khanum patients would be free, if the patient was unable to pay.

We decided to play to our strengths by augmenting services at SKMCH&RC that are in short supply elsewhere in the country, including especially ICU and

ventilated beds to cater to these COVID-19 patients. We therefore expanded our ICU in Lahore from 11 to 35 ventilated beds and an entire inpatient unit was converted to a COVID isolation ward for patients who were not yet ill enough to need ICU as well as for those who had recovered and no longer required ICU care.

At the same time, of course, we were acutely aware of our primary responsibility to our cancer patients. Being the largest cancer care provider in the country, cancer patients throughout the region have come to rely heavily on our facilities. Life-saving treatment for such patients cannot be deferred interminably, even amidst a pandemic. Therefore, chemotherapy and radiation treatment have continued uninterrupted, throughout the pandemic. Likewise, emergency surgery for cancer patients continued without a day's interruption. Elective surgery was stopped for two weeks, before resuming again in April, initially for day-case procedures but extending rapidly over the next few weeks to encompass the full range of cancer surgical procedures by mid-May. In order to reduce crowding and patient flow in the hospitals, we launched a telemedicine outpatient clinic service in early April, by means of which several hundred patients were seen and evaluated each day by our consultants. At a time when travel was difficult for most people, this served as a source of considerable comfort for our patients, secure in the knowledge that help from Shaukat Khanum was only a phone call away. This service has helped greatly in reducing the risk of our patients contracting COVID-19 by decreasing non-essential visits to our Hospitals in Lahore and in Peshawar.

One of the key steps in providing safe care to our cancer patients was the establishment of a triage and assessment centre outside the main hospital building in Lahore. This has been named Camp COVID and has allowed us to evaluate and screen all patients coming to the hospital, and to separate those who have symptoms suggestive of coronavirus from the rest of our cancer patients, whose weakened immune system places them at great risk of complications from COVID-19. While we continue to provide free COVID-19



screening and testing services to all our underprivileged cancer patients, for the first two months, we also provided these services free of charge to anyone who visited Camp COVID and fulfilled relevant medical criteria, regardless of whether they were Shaukat Khanum patients or not.

We took a number of measures in all areas of our Hospitals, in accordance with international best practice and guidelines, to ensure a safe environment for everyone at our facilities. These measures included restricting patient attendants and visitors, screening of all staff before entering clinical areas, enforcing social distancing, adhering to strict disinfection protocols, and use of all appropriate personal protective

equipment (PPE) as recommended by the World Health Organization.

Every instrument, machine and surface area is disinfected after coming into contact with a patient. All in-patient rooms and outpatient clinics are deep-cleaned regularly to further ensure optimal conditions for our patients.

The entire process of patient care has changed dramat-



ically as a result of the pandemic. Starting from facility changes and an increased need for supplies, including but not limited to PPE, through the process of evaluation of suspected COVID-19 patients, to their admission and disease management, costs have risen quite substantially. It has only been possible to continue to provide our world-class services, despite the huge increase in costs necessitated by the pandemic, because of the unflinching support of our well-wishers and donors. This has meant that we have managed to continue to provide not only free cancer treatment but also free COVID-19 management to all our needy cancer patients. As we fight on these two fronts - cancer and coronavirus - this year, we rely more than ever on the continued generous support of donors and friends.



## OUR PHARMACY RESIDENCY PROGRAMME RECEIVES INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION



The Pharmacy Residency Programme of SKMCH&RC has been accredited by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP), which accredits all pharmacy residency programmes in the US. SKMCH&RC is only the second non-US hospital in the world to receive ASHP accreditation.

SKMCH&RC pharmacy residency graduates will now receive an International Pharmacy Practice Residency (IPPR) and Post-graduate Year 1 (PGY-1) SKMCH&RC certificate, accredited by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists.

This is a great achievement for the Hospital and for our country and we hope that this accreditation will take the pharmacy profession to new heights in Pakistan.





# SHAUKAT KHANUM'S NUCLEAR MEDICINE SERVICES CONTINUE TO EXPAND

Nuclear medicine plays a vital role in cancer management, having roles in both the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. It usually involves the injection of radioactive materials, known as radio-tracers, into the body, to help identify foci of cancer, as well as in many situations to provide treatment thereof. The Department of Nuclear Medicine at SKMCH&RC in Peshawar has been augmented by the addition of new state-of-the-art equipment, including a SPECT-CT Camera and a Dual-Energy X-ray Absorptiometry (DEXA) scanner. The SPECT-CT scanner will facilitate diagnosis and management of various types of cancer, while the DEXA scanner is used to measure bone density, which is also essential in the management of many types of cancer. These new additions to the department, which is also equipped with the

region's only PET-CT scanner, mean that comprehensive diagnostic and therapeutic nuclear medicine services are now available to patients throughout this area.

A second state-of-the-art SPECT-CT scanner has been installed at the Hospital in Lahore, while a new DEXA scanner has been commissioned at our Diagnostic Centre in Liberty Market, Gulberg.

In line with our mission, we continue to upgrade our facilities according to the latest international standards, so as to ensure that we can always provide the best possible treatment to all our patients, irrespective of their ability to pay.



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