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**Serena Hotels**

**Corporate**

**18th OCTOBER 2022**

**Serena Hotels Hosts High Profile Awareness Event on Breast Cancer**

ISLAMABAD: “Our sustained and continuous efforts of raising awareness regarding breast cancer are yielding results, as women in far-flung areas of the country are becoming aware of the deadliness of breast cancer, since a rise in early-stage breast cancer detection is being reported in health care centres all over Pakistan.”

These remarks were expressed by the Honourable First Lady of Pakistan, Begum Samina Alvi; an active advocate for breast cancer awareness, during her keynote address at a high-profile panel discussion on Breast Cancer Awareness hosted by Serena Hotels under the banner of Raabta – a Public Diplomacy initiative.

Raabta is curated by renowned broadcast journalist Sidra Iqbal, and uses the convening power of Serena Hotels to bring thought leaders, policymakers, experts, and the civil society together to advance debate and curate knowledge about important socio-economic topics.

The experts on the panel included Dr. Ayesha Isani Majeed, Head of Radiology Department and Incharge Federal Breast Cancer Screening Center at the Pakistan Institute for Medical Sciences (PIMS); Dr. Abida K. Sattar, Head of Breast Surgery at the Aga Khan University Hospital Karachi; Ms. Shireen Gheba an author, blogger, painter, and a cancer survivor, diagnosed in 2021 who is now cancer free; and Mr. Aizaz Chaudary, the Director of Institute of Strategic Studies and former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, who is also a male survivor of breast cancer.

With 2.3 million diagnoses in 2020, breast cancer is the most common cancer in women and the second most common cause of cancer-related deaths in women worldwide. Pakistan has the highest prevalence of breast cancer in Asia, with 1 out of 6 women expected to be diagnosed with the disease at some point in their lives.

The honourable First Lady appreciated the efforts of Serena Hotels for annually organising awareness sessions for the public, though the utilisation of the Raabta Platform, as it has a valuable outreach and the discussion of the experts and cancer warriors is indeed an inspiration for all.

Sidra Iqbal remarked that with 90,000 women being diagnosed with breast cancer every year and the high death rate from the disease, indicates a dire need to break the cultural and traditional barriers to disease prevention and cure.

Dr. Ayesha Isani Majeed stressed that yearly mammograms for women over 40 and regular breast self-examinations should become a part of women’s self-care routine. She informed that the Federal Breast Cancer Screening Centre at PIMS is the first public sector facility in Islamabad which offers initial screening and detection, biopsy, ultrasound and mammography to patients under one ceiling, and was built to facilitate the growing demand of patients especially those unable to afford the costs of private hospitals. Dr. Isani also spoke of the need to create support groups for those suffering from the disease as the willpower to fight the disease played a major role in recovery.

Mr. Aizaz Chaudhary said that there was a need to target men in awareness campaigns by distributing pamphlets and informational material. Sharing his personal experience, he said he faced a delay in diagnosis due to the ignorance related to the prevalence of male breast cancer.

Dr. Abida K. Sattar from the Aga Khan University Hospital said that the disease is often hereditary, and it has nothing to do with the character of a woman as surmised by some ignorant segments. She urged measures for early detection, as it was the biggest weapon towards the eradication of the disease. Dr. Abida shared that there is IVF fertility treatment now available for women whose fertility might be adversely affected by chemotherapy.

Ms. Shireen Gheeba an author, blogger, artist and a cancer warrior, who was diagnosed in May of 2021 and has since completed her treatment and is now cancer free. “While avoiding the ‘C’ word of COVID9 in our lives, I ended up with the “C” word of “Cancer.”

Serena Hotels is an advocate for discussion and discourse on important topics that affect society, under the organisation's Public Diplomacy initiative.