

BODY AND MIND

# The health



UROLOGY CARE  
BAHAMAS

## Get free HIV/AIDS testing this Friday

Despite considerable medical breakthroughs, the global HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to claim millions of lives around the world. And here in the Bahamas, the numbers are equally distressing, with recent statistics revealing that one in 50 people is currently living with the disease. In the face of such troubling data, healthcare professionals and advocacy groups alike have heightened efforts to raise awareness about the disease and encourage more Bahamians to know their HIV status.

Bahamas Waste, Nassau's only provider of medical and hazardous waste disposal services, has partnered with the Ministry of Health to encourage people to get tested. This Friday, June 28, healthcare professionals will set up free testing stations in Rawson Square as well as offer private counselling for hundreds of people.

Event organisers hope to attract as many as 800 people with this annual initiative. Dubbed 'The Bahamas National HIV Testing Day', the event is part of a wider regional project targeting the Caribbean and Latin America, and works to prevent and stop the spread of HIV/AIDS.

"Knowing your status is the first step in stopping the spread of this terrible disease," said Paula Bowleg of the Bahamas HIV/AIDS Centre. "We want to encourage everyone who can to come out and take advantage of this confidential and free testing."

Bahamas Waste will oversee all medical disposal as well as sanitation at the event grounds, providing garbage bins, portable toilets and hand-washing stations for all clinical workers and participants.

"We've supported this programme since 2011," said Bahamas Waste Operations Manager Ethelyn Davis. "It is part



of our core philosophy to help support our communities on all fronts. We are proud to support the efforts of our government and the amazing volunteers within the Ministry of Health to help reverse the impact of HIV/AIDS in the Bahamas and around the world."

For more than 12 years, Bahamas Waste has partnered with the All Saints Camp which was founded in 1989 in response to the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic. Since then, the home has continued to provide room, board, and treatment for up to 60 individuals who may otherwise not be able to receive the care they need.

"Every year we work to provide clothing, food and toiletry items which they need to make the lives

**VOLUNTEERS** from the Ministry of Health offer free HIV/AIDS testing at the 2018 national testing day event. The confidential process is part of effort to encourage more people to know their status. (Photos/HIV/AIDS Centre/Ministry of Health)



of the residents there more comfortable," said Ms Davis. "We look forward to even more opportunities to assist in stopping the spread of this epidemic."

## The challenges and rewards of an oncologist

By Dr Nevein Girgis  
Medical oncology consultant

The medical field especially oncology is exciting, ever-changing, and dramatic in nature. Healthcare is fast-paced; you are dealing with life or death situations, and new patients come in every day, so you never will experience the same day twice.

Although a medical career is extremely rewarding and often lucrative, healthcare professionals experience high levels of stress, and the field requires a great deal of commitment, endurance and hard work.

It's a long and hard way to the making of a doctor. If you want to be a specialist, you have to dedicate 15 years of your life to devote to school and training. But all the hard work pays when you are finally a doctor and bring your

patients back to a normal, healthy life.

Being an oncologist allows me to continually learn and be updated about medical advancements in order to offer the best services for my patients. An oncologist is a doctor who specialises in cancer treatment. Many times oncologists take on a specialty or even a sub-specialty and focus on specific types of patients-like paediatric oncologists-or cancer of a specific area of the body-like gynaecological oncologists.

In terms of the advantages and disadvantages of medical oncology in particular, one of the most rewarding aspects of being an oncologist is giving hope to a patient with cancer. Treating the patient means hopefully eradicating the cancer and giving the patient a new lease on life. When patients are cured of cancer this



DR Nevein Girgis

is a very rewarding experience for oncologists. I believe that oncologists not only treat cancer but also have a role in preventing and early detecting the disease; through educating the community about the risk factors of different types of cancer and how to use the screening tests available for early detection. Early detection is the best protection as it saves many lives, once the cancer is discovered in its early stages is much easier to control compared with the advanced stages presentation of the disease.

On the other hand, cancer being the second leading cause of death means that oncologists

sometimes lose patients and that can be very hard to face. When you give it your best and still that is not enough, and science fails and the patient only has you to depend upon for life and there is nothing you can do for them, then it's tough. The drawback relates to the severity of each condition on a case-by-case basis, because just as there is a large chance to make an immeasurable improvement on the quality of life for cancer patients, there is also a non-negligible potential for situations that are challenging to ameliorate.

When faithful patients are diagnosed with cancer, they turn to their faith to help them find comfort and meaning during difficult times. The challenge of the disease helps them renew their faith.

According to the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 69 percent of cancer patients say they pray for their health. A recent study published in *Cancer*, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Cancer Society, suggests a link between religious or spiritual beliefs and better physical health reported among patients with cancer.

"In our observational study, we found people who found feelings of transcendence or meaningfulness or peace reported feeling the least physical problems," said lead author Heather Jim, PhD. "A lot of cancer patients have a reaction when diagnosed of 'Why me?' or feel like they're being punished or get angry. This is a normal part of coming to terms with a cancer diagnosis."

For the report, researchers from Moffitt Cancer Centre and colleagues looked at the results of several published studies on the topic, which included more than 32,000 cancer patients

combined. They found a link between patients with higher levels of spiritual well-being and reporting better physical health. The researchers did not look at whether spiritual well-being affected patient survival or cancer recurrence. According to the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN), while a cancer diagnosis can encourage some people to renew their faith, it can have the opposite effect on others. For them, a diagnosis can challenge their faith and make them doubt their beliefs or religious values. They may become angry at God or doubt the existence of a higher power. The NCCN says feeling this way can make it harder for patients to cope with cancer and its treatment. It can be helpful and healthy to talk to someone who can understand these feelings of doubt and anger.

Finally, I have to admit that being an oncologist is not only a job; for me it's more a mission and a call at the same time. In what other profession can you touch lives the way you can in the healthcare industry? With God's help you could be the tool to save a life from ending. You can touch lives and help families to find faith and comfort even in the middle of their hard times. Not only will you impact individuals, you could also make an impact on entire communities.

The Cancer Centre Bahamas at the Medical Pavilion Bahamas remains the only American College of Radiation Oncology (ACRO) accredited cancer centre outside of North America that provides for all of your cancer needs - screening diagnostic, medical, surgical, paediatric and radiation oncology treatment - all under one roof.



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