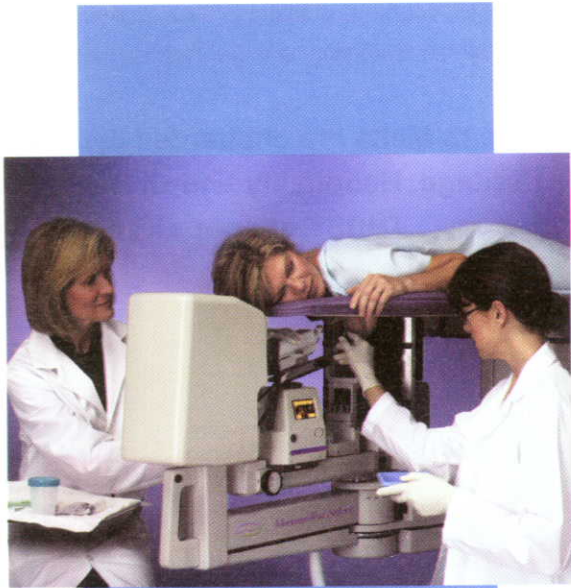


BREAST CANCER TREATMENT MUST BE AVAILABLE TO ALL WOMEN - SAY MEPs

By Carmel Attard - Forum Malta fl-Ewropa



“The EU has established a number of guidelines on breast cancer, and according to Karin Jöns, some 31,000 women could be saved from death if these guidelines were to be fully implemented by Member States.”

The European Parliament last week adopted a resolution stressing the need for breast cancer screening to be available to all women. In addition, MEPs want to see the creation, by 2016, of a network of centres of excellence in the treatment of breast cancer across the Member States of the European Union.

The resolution was the initiative of Karin Jöns (Social Democrat, Germany) and three chairpersons of different European Parliament committees, namely Karl-Heinz Florenz (EPP, Germany) who chairs the Health Committee; Jan Andersson (PES, Sweden) who presides over the Social Affairs Committee; and Anna Zaborska (EPP, Slovakia) who is the chairperson of the Committee for Women’s Rights.

In its resolution, the European Parliament called on the European Commission to present a progress report without delay on how Member States are implementing preventive measures to reduce the mortality rate from breast cancer.

Statistics available from European sources provide a shocking reality: in the European Union, a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer every two minutes. A woman dies from breast cancer every seven minutes. This type of cancer is the most frequent cause of death for women aged between 35 and 59.

Not all EU Member States offer mammography screening, and in some of the Member States where it is available, breast screening neglects women who are either under 40 or over 59 years of age.

The four MEPs addressed the press to explain their stand in favour of making breast screening and cancer treatment as widely available as possible. The German MEP, Karin Jöns, said breast cancer is set to become much more common over the next few years. She added that the incidence of the disease among young women has doubled in less than 40 years. The EU has established a number of guidelines on breast cancer, and according to Karin Jöns, some 31,000 women could be saved from death if these guidelines were to be fully implemented by Member States.

MEP Karl-Heinz Florenz said women must have equal access to breast screening and treatment throughout the European Union. He finds it shocking that in the EU it seems to be difficult for Member States to respect common rules on health, as is the case with the European guidelines on breast cancer treatment.

In their resolution, the MEPs also asked the European Commission to prepare a Charter to protect the rights of patients suffering from breast cancer and also of those who have a chronic disease who still go to work. Recent studies show that 20 per cent of patients suffering from breast cancer do not return to their work; and those who do, are often faced with a reduction in their salaries. MEPs believe that the Charter would help in the reintegration of patients with breast cancer.

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