



Fighting breast cancer:

with awareness, technology and compassion

Early detection is critical to giving breast patients the best chance for survival; and imaging, awareness and self-care all play a role.

CASE STUDY

Centre d'Imagerie Médicale
Intilaka, Tunisia



Case Study

INTERVIEW WITH **DR RIHAB ATTAOUI**,
CENTRE D'IMAGERIE MÉDICALE INTILAKA, TUNISIA



October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic and successive confinements, screening has become more and more difficult.

“We need to put even more effort into the fight against this deadly disease,” describes Dr. Rihab Attaoui, radiologist and breast imaging specialist at the Centre d’Imagerie Médicale Intilaka, in Tunisia.

For five years, the imaging center has been supported in its patient care efforts by Agfa’s DX-M – a computed radiography (CR) solution with needle-based detectors that can deliver the high image quality required for mammography.

The far-reaching impact of breast cancer

“Breast cancer is the number one cancer killing women in the world. Often, they are in the prime of their lives, and the repercussions are felt throughout their families and communities, emotionally but also financially,” begins Dr. Attaoui.


The impact is particularly felt in the underprivileged regions of the world. While in wealthy countries, the survival rate for breast cancer can rise to between 80-90%, in poorer countries the survival rate may be as low as 20%,

she describes. “More than half of the women who die from breast cancer live in poorer countries. The lack of access to screening and early treatment means that all too often, these women aren’t diagnosed until their disease is at an advanced state. There is also a lack of support and even palliative care. The global Covid-19 pandemic has even exacerbated the situation, as patients have been very hesitant to leave their homes and visit doctors or medical centers.”

Ensuring care for every woman

Early detection is critical to giving breast patients the best chance for survival; and imaging, awareness and self-care all play a role, Dr. Attaoui continues. In close collaboration with the Health Ministry, she and other doctors work to bring free care and greater awareness around breast health – not only during October,

but also the rest of the year. They visit rural villages and underprivileged neighborhoods with a multidisciplinary team of gynecologists, oncologists, radiologists, nurses and midwives, to provide diagnosis and treatment. “These women cannot travel to the medical centers themselves, so we must go to them.”

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Dr. Rihab Attaoui,

Radiologist and breast imaging specialist, Centre d’Imagerie Médicale Intilaka, Tunisia



Self-care: healthy bodies, healthy minds

But prevention is even better than cure, she insists, and there are many things women can do to maximize their overall health: “Keeping your immune system healthy can help your body fight off cancers. That means balanced, healthy eating, regular physical exercise, and avoiding stress.”


In addition, every woman should do regular breast self-palpations, especially right after their menses. If they feel anything ‘unusual’, they should consult a physician. Regular medical visits also help ensure early detection of any problems.

Communication is key

To spread the word, she adds, awareness programs need to reach both the general public and the medical community. “For several years, we have organized forums, mostly during conferences and workshops, in which experts come together to share the most recent scientific and social developments in the field of breast cancer.”

Modern communication can also be put to good use. “Some countries have a

national screening program, with women automatically receiving reminders and invitations to visit their physician and get their mammograms. While we don’t have such a system, we have relied on social media, in addition to traditional media such as television and radio; these offer us excellent communication channels to encourage patients to do their check-ups, while ensuring them the hygiene conditions they need to feel comfortable in the Covid era.”

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Dr. Rihab Attaoui

Agfa Solutions

DX-M: CR solution with needle-based technology delivering excellent quality images



Compact system offering excellent image quality



Very high, 50 µm pixel pitch, for mammography and general radiography



High throughput, delivered by a unique five cassette drop-and-go buffer



Very fast preview



First-time right mammography images, with the DX-M

“Agfa’s DX-M has been a game-changer for us. As a small radiology center, we needed a cost-effective mammography solution offering no compromises in image quality.

DX-M offers us a convenient, easy-to-use and very fast solution. With the needle-based imaging plates and MUSICA image processing, we get very high-quality results. There’s no need to change window-level, and images are right the first time. The high DQE with DX-M’s needle plates gives us confidence that the patient’s images won’t be overexposed. Combined with the DRYSTAR AXYS printer, every detail is visible to the clinician’s eye, making it easier to detect subtle masses and microcalcifications.”

Dr. Rihab Attaoui,

radiologist and breast imaging specialist at the Centre d’Imagerie Médicale Intilaka

Practical solutions for a caring society

For those who have friends, family or colleagues fighting breast cancer, Dr. Attaoui advises compassion: “Be present, listen: that will make the person feel supported. You don’t necessarily have to say much, or give your opinion, unless she asks for it: just being there is often enough. Perhaps engage in an activity together, even a simple walk. If she expresses sadness or fear, or if she cries, let her; this is a natural and even necessary reaction to stress. Respect

her decisions regarding her treatment, even if you disagree.”

“If it is a colleague, keep her informed of what is happening at work, and include her in projects and social activities – let her decide if she is able to participate. And continue to offer help throughout her journey: often, people are generous with their time at the beginning, but treatment and recovery can last a long time, and your efforts will be appreciated!”

Global strategies, local efforts

“The Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health (2016–2030) aims to end all preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths by 2030, and improve their overall health and well-being. Fighting breast cancer is certainly a part of this. Guided

by the strategy, we must increase our efforts to fight against the cancers impacting women throughout the world, especially in under-privileged areas, including within the Maghreb, by strengthening the health system and healthcare coverage,” she concludes.



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