



My World

Adel Araf is a clinical oncologist who trained in Ain Shams University, Cairo, and is now working as a specialist medical oncologist in Dubai Hospital, in the UAE. He leads a group of young oncologists from the region who are working to drive up standards of cancer care throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

■ Why I chose to work in cancer

I chose clinical oncology, which combines medical and radiation oncology, because I was impressed at how biology and physics come together to give magnificent results. Cancer is a very interesting and challenging branch of medicine.

■ What I love most about my job

Finding ways to relieve the pain and suffering of my patients. Sometimes even the smallest things can help, like giving them a quick appointment.

■ The hardest thing about my job

The hardest thing is telling a patient there are no more treatment options. It is particularly hard when you see patients who cannot receive the optimum treatment because it is too expensive and not covered by their insurance.

■ What I've learnt about myself

I like to be different, and I'm always looking to find new ways to solve problems.

■ I'll never forget...

A young patient with breast cancer metastasised to the lung, who I treated

at the beginning of my residency in clinical oncology in Ain Shams university hospital. She was very dyspneic, and I thought she was going to die. But I was highly impressed by how she improved after chemotherapy and she did very well for a long time. I learnt never to lose hope. We always have to do our best, because we still don't really know how the disease will behave. A very bad situation can turn out quite well.

■ A high point in my career

Setting up my research group, MedicalSurveys-17, and the MENA breast cancer guidelines project that we started with the ESO/EASO. This project seeks to gather information about the clinical practice of oncologists in the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa) and highlight obstacles to applying international guidelines. The findings will be used to adapt the guidelines to regional circumstances. It encapsulates my interest in trying to improve the service we give to cancer patients by minimising the impact of economic and logistic issues on our treatment decisions.

■ I wish I were better at...

I wish I were able to do more things

at the same time and to achieve more in a shorter time.

■ What I value most in a colleague

I value colleagues who are smart and work hard. I like people who always think outside the box and try to find new solutions.

■ The most significant advance in my specialism in recent years

I think the most significant advance in cancer treatment recently is personalisation of treatments and finding specific receptors and targets that can predict how each patient will respond to a given treatment and give a clue about their prognosis.

■ My advice to someone entering clinical oncology today would be...

Work hard and think about different ways of doing things. Success comes from innovating, not just being more clever.

■ What I wish I'd learnt at medical school

I wish I had learnt more about clinical research and been offered more of a chance to get involved in planning and carrying out clinical trials. ■