



The Kosova Center for Fighting Breast Cancer “JETA/VITA” was established in March 2005, and was officially registered as an NGO in Winter 2006.

With the support of a group of prominent women in Kosovo, as well as doctors from different fields, the initial goals were two-fold: to inform and educate women about breast cancer, including the necessity of self-examinations and regular medical check-ups; and to help increase the survival rate of affected women, along with assistance for their families while women are undergoing treatment.

Currently, another goal is to **raise awareness in Kosovo of a very alarming situation:** while the conditions for prevention, early detection and treatment of cancers are limited in Kosovo, there is also a lack of qualified personnel and equipment at the Institute of Oncology.

Therefore, another major objective is to **meet with affected women, support them emotionally,** and try **to find better treatment,** clinics, pharmacies and experts in a region that is woefully under-funded, with a fragile healthcare infrastructure.

Some of the initiatives that Jeta/Vita took – unknown in Kosovo beforehand -- were the following:

- **Created a brochure (8 color pages) with photos and information showing self-examination** and, therefore, very useful for women regardless of their level of education.
- **Distributed 20,000 copies for free** with Kosovo’s most widely read daily *Koha Ditore*
- **Established the JETA/ITA website** (unfortunately, there is no current funding to maintain it)
- **Developed a “Month against Breast Cancer” in March, “International Women’s Month,”** with the Women’s Network of Kosovo and its 85 member NGOs.
 - **On March 8, 2007 organized a petition** to request the establishment of a national strategy against breast cancer, as well as the completion of the Institute of Oncology. Within 7 hours J/V collected 2725 signatures, as well as many email messages of support from within Kosovo and abroad.

- All national TV stations broadcast a **Public Service Announcement (PSA)** designed to raise breast cancer awareness – and showed it just before and after the primetime evening news.
- **Media was extensive** and included several newspapers, magazines, Women's News Network and they participated on TV and radio debates.

April 7, 2007: International Health Day, and Kosovo's first Conference on Breast Cancer. It was the first time that women affected by breast cancer broke the taboo and talked publicly about their experiences. These four women are heroes in the eyes of current sufferers.

- First day was for health-care providers and second day for patients. Recommendations were taken from the Conference and sent to the relevant institutions,

May, 2007 published an edition of the Medical Bulletin, focusing on breast cancer

- 28 pages were written by Dr. Elvis Ahmedi, thoracic surgeon, who performs the most surgeries in Kosovo, and is a founding Board Member of BBCI.
- Other sections were written by the Deputy of Minister of Health, the President of the Committee on Health in Parliament, the Executive Director of the Kosova Women's Network, medical experts, and six stories were contributed by affected women.

May and June 2007 - organized three workshops: in the cities of Prizren, Pejë and Gjakovë.

- **All workshops were recorded** by electronic media and broadcast several times on local television
- Discussions on equipping a Mobil Mammography Van to help make these essential tests convenient for the women in all over the Kosovo, especially in rural regions and **areas inhabited by minorities. This idea will be developed in one of the future projects.**

May 26, 2008 – organized patients and medical personnel in several cities in Kosovo to participate in a lecture and Qs and As with Dr. Balazs Bodai at the Telemedicine Centre. A renowned U.S. breast cancer surgeon, Dr. Bodai was sponsored by U.S. Embassy in his regional visits to Skopje, Tirana and Pristina.

August 5, 2008 – organized patients, medical personnel, women MPs and media to welcome Ms. Becky Haddad from the **Susan G, Komen for the Cure Foundation (U.S.), the world's largest grass-roots organization for raising breast cancer awareness.**

Jeta/Vita is an integral part of the newly-established (December 21, 2007) **Balkans Breast Cancer Initiative (BBCI), and looks to the future with hope, energy and renewed commitment to the fight against breast cancer.** *Natife Latifi Vera Shala and Besa Salimi*

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