



CONQUERING CANCER: Awareness is the Key



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Dr Robert Ekka, Assistant Professor of Medicine, NBMCH



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Dr Samrat Dutta, Oncologist, associated with NBMCH

patients are non-alcoholic and non-smokers, said Dr Dutta. He also said that one should understand the symptoms of the disease. "If one can get himself tested after getting symptoms at the early stage, it will become easier for us to treat them, and the treatment also becomes successful," the doctor says.

A few symptoms of cancer are, anorexia, loss of appetite, bleeding from several places specially from per vaginal for female, for male rectum bleeding, water discharge or colour change in any mole in the body, bleeding without any injury, unexplained weight loss etc. "From new born babies to old men of 90 years come here for treatment. The disease can be in born also," Dr Dutta added. "To protect from the disease one should maintain a good and balanced diet. Breakfast should be heavy, lots of water, balanced food, proper awareness on the symptoms are the key things which everyone should do," he added. He further added that the NBMCH is giving a good treatment of cancer. They have the arrangement for chemotherapy. Also the hospital

provides palliative care services for the last stage patients. NBMCH also has 60 beds only for cancer patients in ENT department.

Meanwhile, Dr Robert Ekka, Physician and Assistant Professor of Medicine of NBMCH also focuses on the awareness of the disease. He says liver problem, thyroid, tiredness, laziness, frequent and long duration of fever, clod, Lymphoma are the symptoms of cancer. Lymphoma is one kind of blood cancer. "If the disease can be detected early then there is a possibility of 100 per cent curability of cancer. One person should get tested in every three years. Women can do a self breast examination in their homes only which helps in detecting breast related cancer or tumour. A person should take routine general examination like X-ray, USG and basic tests so that any disease can be detected at the early stage," Dr Ekka added.

One should avoid red meat, alcohol, arsenic water, should have regular good diet habits, avoid fast food etc, to protect from these types of diseases," Dr Ekka further said.

SANCHITA AICH BAG

The number of cancer patients is increasing every day in the entire country. But with the new technology and high quality treatment, the disease becomes curable but the patient should have will power and should have to be aware of the disease. Today is World Cancer Day. With the theme of this year's World Cancer Day, "I am and I will," doctors

want to give a boost to the will power of cancer patients. The theme means, "You and your commitment to act. We believe that through our positive actions, together we can reach the target of reducing the number of premature deaths from cancer and noncommunicable diseases by one third by 2030." The Echo of India had a talk with a few doctors of Siliguri who deal with cancer patients. All the doctors are focusing on one thing:

awareness of people about the disease and its symptoms.

Dr. Samrat Dutta, oncologist, Associated with North Bengal Medical College and Hospital says everyday around 50-60 cancer patients visit NBMCH for treatment, on an average the number becomes 2000 patients per year. Previously, the number was less, but now with the lifestyles, food habits and many other reasons the number of patients is increasing. He says female

patients outnumber male patients. According to him Cancer can occur in different parts of the body and the reasons for the cancers are many. The basic reasons of the cancers are, erratic food habits, fast food, unhealthy lifestyle, disbalanced diet, fasting, stress, chewing gutka, betel nuts, smoking, drinking etc. However only 20 per cent to 30 per cent alcoholics and smokers get affected by cancer and the maximum number of cancer

Making out the malady

DR ARNAB GUPTA
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There is no need to think that one should not do tests as that may cause cancer or expose the fact that he or she is harbouring cancer. On the contrary, it is prudent to detect a cancer or a pre-cancerous area which can then be completely cured. More if it is neglected, worse is the result and more aggressive and expensive will be the treatment
— Dr Arnab Gupta

Treatments of Cancer?
 Surgery (by removing the tumour along with a chunk of normal tissue and local glands) is the gold standard in Early stage of most of the cancers. Additional treatment in the form of Radiotherapy (blasting the cancer cells with special rays) and Chemotherapy (some specific medicines to kill the cancer cells scattered around in the body) may be needed in more advanced cases. Treatment with Hormones is also important for cancers of Breast and Prostate.

SAROJ GUPTA
CANCER CENTRE & RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SGCC&RI), Thakurpukur, is a philanthropic organization dedicated to providing cancer management at an affordable cost along with carrying on cancer based research activities. It was built under the leadership of Dr Saroj Gupta with the main aim of serving the underprivileged people. With the help from people of different walks of life- from school children to celebrities, from daily wage earners to the affluent, the 12 acres of marshy land in 1973 now boasts of a 310 bedded fully comprehensive cancer hospital, not deviating from its main objective of serving the poor with 20% free beds and 50% General beds. As advancements are regularly taking place in the field of Oncology especially in Diagnostics and treatment modalities, it is important that we constantly upgrade our services so that the cancer patients get the best of facilities at affordable costs.

control, the cells multiply excessively and form a lump. This is called tumour. This can be benign- where the lump is slow growing, does not cause damage to the neighbouring structure and do not spread to other organs and are usually not fatal. The other type of tumour is obviously malignant (cancer), where the lump grows very rapidly, involves the neighbouring and distant organs and can be fatal if not treated early.

What are the common types of Cancer?
 In male, where tobacco addiction is a common problem, the common cancers are that of oral cavity, lung and prostate. In females, in rural population the common cancer is that of uterine cervix, whereas that of urban women is breast cancer.

What are the causes of Cancer?
 Unfortunately the causes in 2/3 of all cancers are still not clear, and several researches are going on worldwide to determine this. In 1/3 cases, the causes are proved beyond doubt- of which the most important is tobacco in any form- smoking (Bidi, cigarette, hukka etc.) and smokeless (paan, paan masala, ghutka, khaini, jarda etc.). The other less common causative agents are diet (adulterated food, high fat and less of fruits, vegetables and vitamins, stored and charred food), sunlight (causes skin cancer especially in the white race), western lifestyle (lack of or delayed pregnancy and less breast feeding can cause breast cancer). For uterine cervical cancer the common causes are early and multiple children, multiple partners, low personal

hygiene, infection by a virus (Human Papilloma Virus). In some cases (less than 5%), a genetic abnormality is found which can predispose to cancers in many members of the same family (mainly of breast, ovaries and bowel).

What are the symptoms of cancer?
 Loss of appetite and body weight, an ulcer which is not healing, lump which is rapidly increasing, persistent change of voice, bleeding with cough, vomitus, stool or urine, intermenstrual bleeding, difficulty in swallowing etc.

How to diagnose Cancer?
 Any symptom (as described above) which is persisting and not responding to standard treatment, should be seen by a Specialist doctor and appropriate tests should be done. Depending upon the symptoms, the tests are ordered accordingly. Common tests that are done are- Blood, Stool & Urine tests, Chest X-ray, USG & sometimes CT scan of the abdomen, Endoscopy, Mammography (X-ray of the breasts) etc. Good Clinical examination by a specialist doctor and appropriate tests lead to a quick diagnosis. Biopsies are often ordered to confirm a suspicion before advising any treatment.

What are the

What are the chances of Cure?
 In early stage, especially in Breast and colo-rectal cancers, there is 90% chance of getting cured. However, it is often diagnosed late where the outcome gets affected and can be as small as 20-30% in Stage III. In Stage IV, where the disease has spread elsewhere in the body- cure can not be achieved, and the aim here is mainly to alleviate the suffering while trying to prolong life. Hence it is very important for general awareness of early signs & symptoms of cancer and to do proper tests early.

Some common misconcepts:
 Cancer means death- Most cancers if detected early can be cured completely. Cancer is contagious- it is not (apart from uterine cancer which can spread by a virus through multiple partners). Biopsy can cause cancer or spread of cancer- Biopsy or any surgery does not cause a benign tumour to turn cancerous. Taking a small sample of tissue (mostly done by Fine Needle or a

small punch forceps) do not cause any spread. The doctors can guide you regarding the best way of doing it. Biopsy is important before embarking on a major surgery, radiotherapy or chemotherapy as the tumour may actually be not malignant at all. Even if malignant, the treatment strategy is completely different in different kinds of cancer, so it is important to plan beforehand by knowing the nature of it.

Surgery in cancer causes spread of cancer- it is the reverse. The main treatment for most cancers in early stage is to remove the tumour along with some good healthy tissue margins and the neighbouring glands which may be involved. Removing a tumour partially is always bad and is never advisable. If the tumour is big and when complete surgical excision is not possible, chemotherapy (anti-cancer drugs) or radiotherapy is used to reduce the size and make it operable. Cancer is hereditary- in 95% cases they are not. So there is no need to panic if only one member in the family had cancer, as it may be just accidental. However, if there are 2 or more members who are affected, it will definitely be advisable to see an Oncologist who can assess the risks and order relevant tests. Chemotherapy is painful and causes severe vomiting and permanent hair-loss.

Although some strong chemotherapies which are administered in advanced diseases may cause vomiting, anaemia, etc., these can be counteracted by some preventive medications. Hair-loss is only temporary and does not occur with most of the chemotherapies. Cancer can cause a very painful death- fortunately with different

medicines which are now available and also with radiotherapy in some cases, pain can be very well controlled in advanced diseases where the patient can not be cured. A new modality is Interventional pain therapy where the nerves conducting pain to the brain can be blocked by injection at specific sites.

There is no diagnostic or treatment facility in Eastern India- this is about time people of Eastern India realizes that there is no need to travel to far south or west or outside India for management of cancer. It is not only expensive to travel long distances, but causes unnecessary mental stress on the patient, when they prefer to stay in their locality and get maximum support from all the near and dear ones. There are enough facilities available in Eastern India for all classes of people. You may take help of different

help lines, media and internet to find out which one suits you most.

Take home messages:
 Cancer is preventable by avoiding the risk factors especially tobacco in any form, and can be detected early if people come forward to the doctors with symptoms mentioned above without ignoring them. There is no need to think that one should not do tests as that may cause cancer or expose the fact that he or she is harbouring cancer. On the contrary, it is prudent to detect a cancer or a pre-cancerous area which can then be completely cured. More it is neglected, worse is the result and more aggressive and expensive will be the treatment. Many organs like breast, limbs, larynx (voice-box) etc. can be preserved in early stages with the new modalities of treatment. It is not contagious (except in

Cervical cancer- that is why multiple partners and unprotected sex should be avoided). It is important that the families give maximum support to the victims rather than staying away in fear. Biopsies are advisable before embarking on a treatment and surgery is the treatment in most of the cancers in early stage. There is no need to panic about radiotherapy and chemotherapy- in expert hands the side-effects are minimum and can improve the results significantly. Even in advanced stages symptom control can be well achieved with the Palliative care team and different support groups. Together we must fight to remove all the misconceptions and try and prevent this potentially preventable and curable disease.

LIFE LINE
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WORLD CANCER DAY

Your Life Is Precious To Us

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JOB VACANCY

Name of Post - Library Clerk (Group C) for Mirik College
 Terms and Conditions for the Appointment-
 1. Qualification : Graduation
 2. Minimum three years of experience (Desirable)
 3. Having Computer Knowledge (Handling data and text on computer record maintenance)
 4. Age of candidates should not be more than 38 years with relaxation of 5 years for SC/ST/PWD and 3 years for OBC candidates.

Venue : Mirik College
Date : 7/02/2021
Time : 10am

Total Marks : 220
 Written examination for 150 marks, comprising Mathematics, English and mental aptitude.
 Computer application test for 50 marks
 Interview for 20 marks

Can excessive use of cell phones cause brain tumour? — See page-2