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Immunotherapy push to cancer treatment

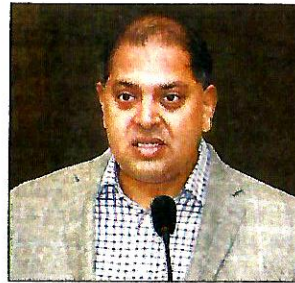
**OUR SPECIAL
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Calcutta: Prolonged treatment post-chemotherapy and increased counselling are among the new methods adopted to meet challenges faced by cancer patients.

"There has been progress in understanding the genomics of an individual patient's disease and that has enabled us to design new treatments and targeted therapies," said Kabir Mody, assistant professor of medicine, co-chair, Hepatobiliary Malignancies Disease Group, Mayo Clinic Cancer Center, Florida.

In his speech, Mody identified immunotherapy as one of the "biggest revolutions" in cancer care in the past five years.

"Cancer uses the mechanism of our immune system to hide and survive. We have now recognised the mechanism that does that. This mechanism can be reversed to enable the immune system to attack and treat cancer," he said.



Kabir Mody speaks in the city on Wednesday.

Picture by Sanat Kr Sinha

On Wednesday, at a lecture on "Challenges of cancer in the present day", organised by Saroj Gupta Cancer Centre & Research Institute, Thakurpukur, Mody laid emphasis on patient education about cancer and its treatment. He advised counselling patients about what to expect in the short term and the long term.

"There are more cancer survivors now than ever have been. What we have to counsel them on is that life goes on after cancer. Patients are becoming advocates themselves," he said.

Doctors who attended Mody's training said that they had picked up "softer skills" from the oncologist as to how to talk to patients, their kin and motivate them in not feeling depressed.

Speaking about genetic counselling, Mody said: "We are learning that a certain percentage of patients with cancer do have genetic alterations that predisposes them to the disease. This needs to be tested so that family members can be counselled."

Saroj Gupta Cancer Centre has collaborated with Mayo Clinic that will facilitate visits by doctors from the Florida centre after three months of Mody's six-day trip.

Over the past few days, Mody has taken classes for postgraduate trainees, held discussions and attended meetings with doctors to discuss specific cases at the institute, said Arnab Gupta, director of the institute.

"We will hold teleconferences with Mayo Clinic to discuss critical cases and seek their advise," Gupta said.