



# Newsletter

■ March, 2023



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# Industry Insight

DakshamA Health is a leading patient organization in India that is committed to providing quality health-care services to all. In a recent collaboration with the Delhi State Cancer Institute (DSCI), DakshamA provided two Cancer advocacy & Patient Education Counsellors who would counsel patients suffering from Head and Neck cancers.

According to the National Cancer Registry Programme (NCRP) report, the estimated number of cancer cases in India in 2020 was around 13.9 lakhs, and this number is expected to rise to 15.7 lakhs by 2025. With such many cancer patients in India, the need for cancer patient counsellors is clear. These counsellors can help patients and their families navigate the complex emotional, physical, and logistical challenges of cancer treatment and recovery.

Head and neck cancers are a growing health concern in India, but patients often struggle to access the necessary treatment and support due to a lack of awareness and information. DakshamA Health is working to address this issue through patient counselling and education. Indian cancer patients face barriers to seeking counselling, such as limited awareness, stigma, limited access, a shortage of trained counsellors, and high costs. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that involves raising awareness, reducing stigma, improving access to counselling services, increasing the number of trained counsellors, and lowering the cost of counselling services.

The two patient counsellors provided by DakshamA Health are highly qualified and experienced professionals who have a deep understanding of the challenges faced by cancer patients. They are well-versed in the vernacular language and can communicate with patients in a way that is comfortable for them. These counsellors provide one-on-one counselling to patients and their families, educating them about the disease, its symptoms, and treatment options. They

also keep records of patients who come to them and have created a patient group that channelizes and educates them by providing them one-on-one tele-counselling with IEC materials, all tailored based on their treatment plan.

This initiative offers quality counselling and support to patients, which is crucial for their mental and emotional well-being. DakshamA Health's counsellors assist patients and their families in navigating the difficult journey of treatment by providing guidance, support, and relevant information. They also help patients manage the side effects of treatment and pain. DakshamA Health's patient group is a praiseworthy effort that provides peer support and educational resources, allowing patients to connect with others who have undergone similar experiences and gain valuable insights. The initiative's counsellors also offer educational materials and resources to improve patients' understanding of the disease and its management. Moreover, DakshamA Health's collaboration with DSCI is a positive step towards enhancing cancer care in India. This initiative not only offers patients access to quality counselling and support but also assists them in navigating the complex healthcare system. The initiative is unique in its provision of free-of-charge services, enabling accessibility to all. It is a significant step towards improving healthcare outcomes and a compelling example of the potential of public-private partnerships.



**Chinki Sharma and Mohour Bera**

Cancer advocacy & Patient Education Counsellors

# Stories of Hope

## 1. Can you tell us a little about yourself, and when were you diagnosed with cancer?

I am Vandana Aggarwal, a volunteer of the Indian Cancer Society and 12 years ago, I was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer. This came to me as a complete shock since at the time, I was in a perfect of health, and I had not noticed any symptoms at all.

## 2. Tell us about your treatment process and what was the most difficult part of your journey.

I underwent treatment that mainly consisted of surgery, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy. This period was a long and very difficult time.

## 3. What is the one thing that kept you going throughout your treatment?

The things that kept me going was my family support, my doctors, my willpower, positivity, and my faith- in God, in destiny and myself. I began to live and go through each day with the motto that I can do it, I will do it and I will have to continue fighting this battle it for my kids, family, and myself; and I finally emerged as a winner in the battle against breast cancer!

## 4. What is your advice to others?

Firstly, I would like to tell people that they should not consider cancer as a death sentence, because in most cases the disease is completely curable, provided one ensures that they get themselves tested at an early stage and they partake in annual check-ups for lumps or any such signs of cancer.

Second, we should together undertake efforts to make society more aware of the disease and educate people about the fact that cancer can happen to anyone, regardless of their age, gender, socio-economic condition, or even geographical location.

Third, cancer is curable and you can beat it with the help of the correct doctors, one's family, one's willpower and a positive mindset cannot be stressed upon enough.

Further, to all the women, I would request you all to please self-examine your breasts, at least once a month. It will merely take two minutes of your day, and this is the simplest and most powerful tool with which you can detect cancer of the breast at an early stage and without too many cost complications.

Lastly, do keep in mind that there is a very beautiful life after treatment without any complications, please do not hesitate to seek out help.



**Ms Vandana Aggarwal**

Stage 2 Breast Cancer Survivor

## Virtual Roundtable discussion on Kidney Cancer

A virtual panel discussion on "Kidney Cancer: Progress and Challenges" was held on March 9, 2023, to recognise World Cancer Day. It was organised by the RAPID Global Cancer Alliance in cooperation with the IHW Council.

Dr Makarand Khochikar, Head of the Department of Uro-Oncology at the Siddhi Vinayak Ganapati Cancer Hospital, moderated the discussion. The esteemed members of the panel for this session were Prof. Dr Raj Nagarkar, MD, Chief of Surgical Oncology and Robotic Services, HCG Manavta Cancer Centre, Dr Anita Ramesh, Consultant Medical Oncologist, Apollo Speciality Hospitals, and Dr Prasant Nayak, Associate Professor and Head, Department of Urology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bhubaneswar.

Dr Khochikar, who opened the discussion, elucidated on the efforts being undertaken by the government including a National NCD Programme and the creation of more cancer facilities in order to ensure all individuals, regardless of their age or economic status are able to access quality cancer care with ease.

The key takeaway was that the major symptoms for kidney cancer can be abdominal pain, hematuria (blood in the urine), lump in the abdomen. Moving forward with the discussion. Dr Anita addressed the situation once we find a kidney mass on sonography mentioning that we need to do a CT scan in order to determine the size of the tumour, how it has spread, and whether there is a blood clot in the blood vessels, and believe you should have the finest possible CT scan since a poor quality one won't reveal the location of the brain and other vital organs.

Coming to one of the major concerns of patients after getting ultrasound and CT scans they want PET scan. So are PET scans really necessary? As a result, the FDG bit scan is not indicated in the primary assessment of kidney cancer. The PSMA pet scan will play a role in this discussion, but the FDG pet scan is honestly not indicated in the assessment of the primary tumour in kidney cancer.

Continuing on with the conversation, Dr. Raj Nagarkar, who has been performing fantastic robotic work, is talking about nephron sparing surgery. I'm sure the robot and laparoscopy have advanced much in performing nephron sparing surgery here. He put some light on how technological advancement has eased the operational challenges. Dr Prashant took the lead to explain the RCC with RV-IVC thrombus.

For a coordinated effort to have a real impact, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), international governmental organisations, cancer health care organisations, cooperative research organisations, and patient and family organisations must work together quickly and closely. A well-organised global health partnership with each partner performing a specialised function has the potential to use the present knowledge and tried-and-true techniques to reduce the gap in access to diagnosis, treatment, and care. This would make a big difference in the fight against kidney cancer.



## Virtual Roundtable discussion on Colorectal Cancer

A virtual panel discussion on “Navigating Colorectal Cancer: From Prevention to Management” was held on March 24, 2023, to recognise World Cancer Day.

Ms. Neeraja Reddy, VP-Genetic Counseling, Mapmygenome, moderated this unique discussion, and was joined by a distinguished panel of speakers including Dr. Ritu Sethi, Senior Consultant, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Cloudnine Hospitals; Dr. Vijay Palwe, Head, Dept. of Radiation Oncology, HCG Hospitals; and Dr. Akar Kapoor, the chief radiologist and medical adviser at a city scan and Clinic private limited, from Bangalore.

The session began by highlighting the largest factors contributing to colorectal cancer and ways to modify the risk by altering our lifestyle. To this Dr Aakaar mentioned that one must maintain a very healthy lifestyle, keep ourselves hydrated, try to have a plant-based diet, and try to avoid these red meat, smoked foods, processed foods, which are predisposing factors of colorectal cancer. The most common age group for having colorectal cancer is above the age of 50, but nowadays a trend of very early incidence of this disease even between the age groups of 20 to 49 years of age is being observed. The discussion addressed problems of screening, early diagnosis, survival rates of CRC if diagnosed early, what are the advancements in treatment and therapy for CRC till date, how have robotic

surgeries and laparoscopy changed the treatment for colorectal cancer Dr Vijay who is expert in this field suggested some of the very important inputs on it.

Dr Ritu, a gynaecological expert shed light on the topic concerning women with CRC and how often symptoms are being misdiagnosed or delayed, the causes for this, as well as the fears women experience when going for screening? She also highlighted the need for families to go through genetic testing and screening for CRC.

Adding to the conversation, Dr Satheesh elaborated on three major areas requiring research for CRC in India, and stressed on the need to collaborate to create a registry for genetic burden causing predisposition to CRC, and the current clinical trials ongoing in India. With this the insightful session on how we can navigate, prevent and manage colorectal cancer and work towards building a healthy and cancer free nation came to a conclusion.



# National Developments



## Policy Insight

■ **THEME:** Cancer policy

■ **UPDATE:** Cancer cases in India are projected to rise from 14.6 lakhs in 2022 to 15.7 lakh in 2025: Government.

### Key Highlights

- The government said it is undertaking a population-based initiative for prevention, control and screening for three common cancers – oral, breast and cervical.
- According to the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Cancer Registry Project (ICMR-NCRP), the number of cancer cases in the country is expected to rise from 14.6 lakhs in 2022 to 15.7 lakh in 2025, the government informed Parliament on March 14.
- The project targets people over the age of 30 for screening for three common cancers: oral, breast, and cervical. Screening for these prevalent malignancies is an essential aspect of service delivery under the Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centers plan, according to the minister in a written reply to a Rajya Sabha question.

## Policy Insight

■ **THEME:** New Cancer Center

■ **UPDATE:** Corpus Fund for Cancer Research in India

### Key Highlights

- 19 State Cancer Institutes (SCIs) and 20 Tertiary Care Cancer Centres (TCCCs) approved under the 'Strengthening of Tertiary Cancer Care Centre Facilities' Scheme.
- With its 'Strengthening of Tertiary Cancer Care Centers Facilities' Program, the Union Health Ministry is working to improve the facilities for tertiary cancer care. The scheme's objective is to enhance the country's tertiary cancer care facilities by giving financial support to various institutes.
- The plan has authorised 19 State Cancer Institutes (SCIs) and 20 Tertiary Care Cancer Centers (TCCCs). These institutes are dedicated to cancer research as well as tertiary care.  
Focuses on:  
Oncology  
Department of Health Research  
Primary Responsibilities  
Tobacco Control and Drug Dr-addiction Treatments



## Policy Insight

■ **THEME:** Cancer Burden

■ **UPDATE:** Colorectal cancer on rise in India, experts stress on early preventive screening

### Key Highlights

- Colorectal cancer, also known as cancer of the large intestine, is on the rise in India. Despite a drop in the mortality rate, doctors emphasize early screening, particularly for those aged 45 and over, and a healthy lifestyle to reduce deaths. Colon, rectal, or anus cancers are all referred to as colorectal cancers together.
- Experts say that while it is typical to believe that having a family history makes it harder to avoid cancer, the disease is frequently caused by lifestyle choices, and even in hereditary instances, early detection and prevention can improve results.
- A change in a person's frequency of urination is one of the signs of polyps and colorectal cancer, according to medical professionals. When someone starts using the restroom more frequently—four to five times on average rather than only once per day in the past—and still does not feel relieved, it might be a symptom of stress. Rectal hemorrhage, anaemia, and stomachache are among the other typical symptoms.

## Pipeline news

■ **THEME:** Treatment

■ **UPDATE:** Vara expands into India, bringing advanced technology for breast cancer screening

### Key Highlights

- Every 4 minutes, a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer in India. Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in India, representing 13.5% of all cancer cases found in the country in 2020. populations with very high prevalence of breast cancer in Mexico, Egypt and now India.
- With the goal of enhancing women's and their families quality of life through early breast cancer identification, Vara (German medical technology company) will launch its data-driven breast cancer screening solution with the first screening facilities in Mumbai through its cooperation with Suburban Diagnostics and NM Medical.
- In addition to promoting the value of early diagnosis and breast cancer prevention, Vara will provide screenings at competitive pricing.

- Digital mammography and Artificial Intelligence are used in Vara's technology to find breast cancer in its earliest stages. It can enhance the accuracy of breast cancer screening while minimising the frequency of unneeded biopsies by applying machine learning algorithms to analyse photos and identify the early signals of probable abnormalities.

## Pharma and Medical Device

■ **THEME:** Treatment

■ **UPDATE:** Life-saving colon cancer trial initiated in India; 12 hospitals across the country to participate

### Key Highlights

- Cancer surgeons in India have formed a network of institutions to facilitate a country-wide clinical study investigating how giving colon cancer patients chemotherapy before surgery reduces their odds of the condition recurring.
- The Cancer Research UK-funded FOXTROT experiment found that individuals who took chemotherapy before surgery were considerably less likely to see their cancer come back, compared with those who got all their chemotherapy after surgery.
- Twelve hospitals in India, including Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai and Tata Medical Centre in Kolkata, have volunteered to participate in the FOXTROT-Global study, which is part of the FOXTROT2 Global trial, which is taking place in several locations across the world.
- The experts believe that providing chemotherapy to colon cancer patients before surgery might be easily implemented in India and other health systems throughout the world, with over 10,000 patients every year in India alone who potentially benefit from this treatment.

## Pharma and Medical Device

■ **THEME:** Treatment

■ **UPDATE:** India gets first dedicated precision oncology center

### Key Highlights

- Around 20 lakh new cases of cancer are expected annually starting in India in 2025, and individualised cancer care is promoted as the future of cancer therapy.
- The first precision oncology facility in India is about to open with the promise of personalised cancer therapy based on a patient's genetic profile.
- Although several institutions in the nation already provide individualised cancer treatment, the new centre, which is being founded by a molecular oncologist and cancer geneticist educated at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center and the All Indian Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi, would provide it to every patient.
- The centre will decide on a course of therapy for the patient after taking into account the unique characteristics of that patient and that particular tumour. In many circumstances, this treatment will be different from that provided to another patient who has the same illness and is in the same stage.

## Pharma and Medical Device

■ **THEME:** Device

■ **UPDATE:** This new device can detect cancer without invasive surgeries like biopsy

### Key Highlights

- A recent invention has enabled scientists to detect and analyse cancer directly from blood samples without conducting invasive biopsy surgeries. The device was developed by researchers of the University of Technology. Its future adoption in the healthcare industry can help in easy monitoring and treatment of the problem.
- The Static Droplet Microfluidic Device can quickly identify cancer cells that are circulating and have the potential to metastasize. The system successfully distinguishes between tumour cells and healthy blood cells by employing a distinctive metabolic signature of malignancy.
- A comprehensive look at cancer forecasts for India in 2022 concluded that there will likely be 14,61,427 new cases of cancer there. This indicates that the likelihood of developing cancer is one in nine. The most common malignancies in men and women, respectively, were lung and breast cancers. Lymphoid leukaemia was the most common kind of malignancy among children (aged 0 to 14) with cancer. With comparison to 2020, there will be a 12.8% increase in cancer cases in 2025.

# International Developments



## Policy Insight

- **THEME:** Screening Program
- **UPDATE:** United-sponsored programme screened over one million women for cervical cancer in low- and middle-income countries

### Key Highlights

- Through an integrated prevention programme, delivered by national governments in partnership with the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), Expertise France as the project leader for the SUCCESS project, Jhpiego, and the Union for International Cancer Control, over 1 million women in 14 low- and middle-income countries have been screened for cervical cancer (UICC). Women who tested positive for cervical pre-cancer have gotten treatment in excess of 80% of cases.

## Pipeline News

■ **THEME:** Treatment

■ **UPDATE:** Colorectal cancer on the rise among younger adults

### Key Highlights

- According to the American Cancer Society, 20% of colon cancer diagnoses among adults 55 and under occurred in that year, up from 11% in 1995. The further study demonstrates that both the incidence and mortality rates of colon cancer in those under 50 have consistently risen over the past few decades. When it comes to colon cancer, early diagnosis is key, and screenings are an essential part of keeping one's health.
- Precancerous polyps or growths are the primary cause of colon cancer, which often develops in the colon or rectum. Screening is crucial since the illness typically doesn't manifest symptoms until after it has progressed. Precancerous polyps that are found early can be removed before they develop into cancer, or cancer can be found early on when it is most curable.

- Sedentary behaviour, a diet high in red and processed meats, smoking, binge drinking, obesity, and a family history of colon cancer or inflammatory bowel disease are some of the recognised risk factors for developing colon cancer. Colon cancer is most common among Black Americans, and it is also more likely to occur in those with type 2 diabetes or a history of kidney transplants.

## Policy Insight

■ **THEME:** AI Technology

■ **UPDATE:** Google is working on AI for ultrasound diagnosis and cancer therapy

### Key Highlights

- AI is useful for more than simply creating click-bait financial explainers and term papers; it has the potential to save lives in the medical industry. Google revealed AI-related collaborations for cancer treatments, medical language models, and ultrasound scans at its yearly 'The Check Up' health-care event, highlighting the potential applications of the technology in these fields.
- In areas where there aren't enough qualified doctors, Google believes artificial intelligence is essential for reading ultrasound instruments. The sensors are more widely available than ever, but only professionals can examine and analyse the pictures. By recognising information like the gestational age of pregnant moms and breast cancer early detection rates, the company's AI models may be able to streamline that procedure. The search engine giant is collaborating with Kenyan organisation Jacaranda Health to study AI-based ultrasound therapies for women and newborns in public hospitals in order to make that a reality.

- In addition, the business is doing research with Chang Gung Memorial Hospital in Taiwan to see if AI can identify breast cancer using ultrasound instead of mammograms, which are scarce in areas with less access to resources.
- Also, Google and the Mayo Clinic are working together to examine how AI may be used to schedule radiation for cancer patients. The goal of the research is to speed up and streamline the time-consuming and laborious stages involved in radiation.
- Google believes that AI will aid in the detection of TB in chest x-rays. To increase the accessibility of AI-powered TB tests in Sub-Saharan Africa, the firm is collaborating with an AI-based nonprofit. To aid in the early detection of TB and the provision of early treatment to help minimise its spread, its partners have agreed to donate 100,000 free tests.



## Pharma and Medical Device

■ **THEME:** fight for right

■ **UPDATE:** Why cancer activists are stuck in an endless loop

### Key Highlights

- There's no sign that South Africa's intellectual property laws will change any time soon, public health experts say. That means pharmaceutical companies will keep abusing the country's weak system – and keep the profits rolling in.
- Blood cancer patients in public hospitals can now receive a medicine that may prevent their condition from worsening after years of waiting. Before now, the drug has been too expensive for the government to purchase. As a generic version became available, the price was reduced.
- Six life-saving cancer drugs will stay trapped in the years-long struggle that campaigners had to fight for access to the generic blood cancer treatment lenalidomide, which became available at government hospitals in December.

- In 2016, the branded version of the medicine, Revlimid, cost more than 17 times the price of generic equivalents (R729,000 for a year's supply per patient in 2019), yet public sector patients in South Africa had to wait decades for access.

## Pharma and Medical Device

### ■ **THEME:** New Drug

■ **UPDATE:** Researchers at the University of East Anglia (UEA) in the U.K. have developed a new drug that works against all of the main types of primary bone cancer.

### Key Highlights

- Present therapies are difficult, with antiquated chemotherapy mixtures and the possibility of limb amputation. Despite this, the five-year survival rate is low, at 42%. This is primarily due to the fast progression of bone cancer to the lungs.
- In mice implanted with human bone cancer, a potential medication called CADD522 suppresses a gene related to cancer spread. The ground-breaking medication increases the overall survival rates by 50% without requiring surgery or chemotherapy. And, unlike chemotherapy, it has no harmful side effects such as hair loss, fatigue, or nausea.
- Darrell Green, from the University of East Anglia's Norwich Medical School, was inspired to research on childhood bone cancer after his closest friend died from the condition as a teenager.



**WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
CONTINUED SUPPORT IN OUR  
EFFORTS IN FIGHT AGAINST CANCER.**

**CONTACT US**

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