



NewsLetter

Issue: November 2023 | Vol. XXVII | No. 11 | Price: 50 Paisa

EDITORIAL

CANCER SURVIVAL – IS IT IMPROVING ?

Survival statistics are of great interest to patients, clinicians, researchers, and policy makers. For cancer patients, the main statistic of interest is not population mortality, but individual survival. Survival, not mortality, answers the question that cancer patients want to know: what is my chance of staying alive given my diagnosis? Clearly, survival is an important statistic from a clinical perspective. Different survival measures answer different questions: Overall survival (includes all causes of death), cancer prognosis (net survival that removes competing causes of death), and actual prognosis (crude probabilities that consider competing causes of death).

Cancer survival in a population is affected by a number of factors, including the types of cancer that occur, the stages at which they are diagnosed and whether treatment is available. For cancers that are more amenable to screening and/or treatment, such as female breast, colorectal, and certain childhood cancers, there are large survival differences by HDI (Human Development Index) level. For example, the 5-year survival rate for breast cancer in 2010-2014 was 90% in the US and Australia, compared with 65% in Malaysia. In contrast, for cancer sites without early detection or effective treatment, such as liver, lung, or pancreas, survival rates vary less. In addition to differences in screening and treatment, international differences in cancer survival rates are also affected by disease awareness and data quality.

Cancer survival continues to increase across high-income countries; however, international disparities persist. While truly valid comparisons require differences in registration practice, classification, stage of disease at diagnosis, timely access to effective treatment, and the extent of comorbidity are the main determinants of patient outcomes. Data has been analyzed for different cancers including Lung, colon, rectal, ovarian, oesophageal, stomach, and pancreatic cancer, and survival improvements have been noted for cancers in patients younger than 75 years. Cancer survival used to be generally higher in Australia, Canada, and Norway. Substantial progress has been made in cancer control across high income countries for stomach, colon, lung (in males), and ovarian cancer (in female). The uniform improvements in cancer survival are probably the direct consequence of major health care reforms and technological advances that have enabled earlier diagnosis, more effective and tailored treatment, and better patient management than in previous periods. For example, rectal cancer had one of the most substantial increases in 5-year net survival over time, increasing between 9 to 21 percentage in high income countries. Improvements in surgical techniques, including the implementation of total mesorectal excision and new guidelines that include preoperative radiotherapy are among the key changes that have improved patient outcomes. Improvements in survival were largely seen among younger patients (aged <75 years) and might relate to the relatively wider access to adjuvant chemotherapy and ability of these patients to tolerate more

aggressive treatments than older age groups. Additionally, better diagnosis and staging with new technologies such as PET-CT imaging, alongside greater precision in the selection of patients for targeted therapies on the basis of molecular markers have improved survival. Such progress in the control of different cancer types particularly cancers of the stomach, colon, lung (in males), and ovary, can be attributed to the delivery of multiple evidence-based and effective interventions that span the spectrum of cancer control. However cancer survival in India has been dismally low.

India's cancer graphs tell two distinct stories. The first holds out hope as India's cancer incidence is far lower than developed nations such as Denmark and the US. If cancer strikes over 300 out of every 100,000 population in Denmark, the corresponding number in India hovers around 100. But the second Indian cancer story is worrisome. A study in medical journal, The Lancet, in 2014 indicated only 30% of India's cancer patients survive for over five years. So while India has lower cancer rates than many other countries, it has a high death rate. Maximum cancer patients succumb to lung, head and neck and breast cancers. "We lose almost 80% of all patients detected with lung cancer. The death rate due to breast cancer world over is 20%, but we lose over 50% of our breast cancer patients". Almost 80% of cervical cancer patients are diagnosed in stage 3-4 in India, but the West has almost eradicated this cancer due to regular pap smear tests. Given India's population, it is impossible to scan everybody. "Self-breast exams and clinical exams involving community workers or ancillary health professionals are hence crucial." Lack of awareness is the main cause for late detection.

A report published in the international journal, The Lancet, has also drawn attention to poor infrastructure and treatment facilities for cancer patients in India, which is leading to high cancer mortality. Nearly 70 percent cancer patients die in India; fewer than 30 percent of Indian patients with cancer survive five years or longer after diagnosis. By contrast, in North America and Western Europe, five-year survival for patients with all types of cancers is about 60 percent. Delayed diagnosis and inadequate, incorrect or sub-optimum treatment are the chief factors for poor cancer survival in India. However, investment in high-technology, and methods to take treatment to the peripheral parts of the country, is missing in the country. The effort of all research and investment in infrastructure should lead to reduced suffering due to cancer.

Initiatives have to be categorized for prevention, screening and treatment of each cancer type. At primary prevention front, awareness campaigns, stressing on life styles, food habits and physical activities are necessary. At secondary level, massive screening with newer technology and at the tertiary level, the diagnosed patients should have accessibility to best of health care facilities.

All state holders should create an ecosystem for cancer care accessibility, affordability and assurance (FICCI+EY 2017)



Dr. A. K. Dewan
Director - Surgical Oncology, RGCIRC, Delhi

OVERVIEW OF THE WORLD HOSPICE CARE DAY EVENT: A COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVE FOR COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITIES IN PALLIATIVE CARE



On the auspicious occasion of World Hospice Care Day, an event rooted in the spirit of the people, organized by the people, and dedicated to the people was held under the theme **"Compassionate Communities: Together for Palliative Care."** This remarkable event, known as **"PACES 2023" (Palliative and Compassionate Education Symposium 2023)**, was orchestrated by

the dedicated team from the Department of Pain Management, Hospice Care, and Palliative Medicine at the Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre, Niti Bagh, on 23rd September 2023.

The driving force behind this event was none other than the compassionate family members of those whom we have had the privilege to serve during their journey of care with us.

Prominent luminaries, including Mehta Ji, Sarika Ji, Aashtha Ji, Adish Ji, Tina Ji, Vaneeta Ji, Shruti Ji and others, graced us with their wisdom. They skillfully led discussions on various aspects of the care process, delving into topics such as the concept of total suffering, conflict resolution, the profound impact of symptom management, seamless integration with palliative care, the significance of transitioning to hospice care, and a plethora of other vital subjects.

The event was graced by esteemed dignitaries, Dr. Gowri Nambiar Sengupta (Deputy Director General, Public Health, and Director, Central Health Education Bureau, DGHS, MoHFW) and Mr. Anand Kumar, IAS (Chairman, RERA, Delhi), who participated as Chief Guests. Mr. Rakesh Chopra (Chairman, RGC), Dr. A. K. Dr. Dewan (Director Surgical Oncology, RGC), Dr. Gauri Kapoor (Medical Director, RGCIRC), Dr Vikalp Singh



(Head Operations), Dr. Leena Dadhwal (Surgical Oncology) and Dr. Kapil Goyal (Medical Oncology) also enriched the event with their presence.

Furthermore, we were privileged to have Dr. Rohit Lahori (Nodal Officer, Palliative Care, Jammu and Kashmir, and J & K IAPC President) and Dr. Samarjit Dey (Professor and In Charge, Pain and Palliative Care Division, AIIMS, Manglagiri) as esteemed Guest Speakers.

Dr. Saurabh Joshi (Founder and Managing Partner, Hospice Education India LLP), our Mentor, graced the occasion with his valuable insights, providing expert guidance throughout the scientific program.

The event wouldn't have been a resounding success without the exceptional dedication of our entire team, comprising doctors, nurses, and non-medical team members. A special mention goes to Dr. Vibhu Ranjan Sahni, Dr. Naina Kumar, and other outstanding contributors (Manoj Chauhan, Sachinder, Pinky Bohara, Ghazala Sister, Gyanoshwari Sister, Sunil, Anil, Pratham, and all Niti Bagh staff) who shouldered significant responsibilities, ensuring the event's seamless execution.



It's worth noting the overwhelming enthusiasm and support received from the broader hospital community, including the front desk team, pharmacy, cytotoxic drug team, HR, finance, IT, radiology, and lab services, among others. Their active participation played a pivotal role in making this event an unequivocal triumph.

CME – INDIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (IMA), LUCKNOW, UP

CME program organized by RGCIRC in association with Indian Medical Association (IMA), Lucknow, UP on Saturday, 23rd September 2023 at IMA Hall, River Bank Colony, Qaisar Bagh, Lucknow, UP. Dr. (Prof.) Ishwar Chandra Premsagar, Chief of Neuro & Spine Oncology Services delivered a lecture on **Management of Headache, Role of Surgery & Cyberknife** and Dr. Sumit Goyal, Associate Director - Medical Oncology spoke on **Approach to a Patient with Suspected Cancer**.



NURSICON 2023

NURSICON 2023, the 10th Annual and 2nd International Nursing Conference held on 3rd - 4th November 2023 at Hotel Crowne Plaza, Rohini, New Delhi emerged as a focal point for global discussions on the imperative role of government policy intervention in fortifying the nursing sector. The theme of this conference was Shaping the Future of Cancer Care: Innovations and Best Practices in Oncology Nursing. Organized by The Nursing Department of Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre (RGCIRC), the conference brought together nursing professionals, educators, and healthcare experts to deliberate on advancements in oncology nursing.

Col. Madhumita Dhall, Director of Nursing at RGCIRC, highlighted the crucial aspects of direct patient care, family education, and specialization in areas such as pediatric oncology, radiation oncology, and hemato-oncology. Notably, Col. Dhall stressed the enduring importance of emotional support and patient advocacy in providing comprehensive care, underscoring the unique challenges faced by nurses dealing with cancer patients.

Discussions at the conference covered a broad spectrum of topics, ranging from addressing chemotherapy-induced side effects to improving communication skills for comprehensive patient care. The significance of patient safety, personalized medicine, technology integration, interdisciplinary collaboration, and ongoing research and education in the field were also extensively explored.

A key takeaway from the panel discussion on "Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice" was the pressing need for government policy intervention in India's nursing sector. Proposed policy changes included increased funding for nursing education and infrastructure, the

implementation of a standardized curriculum to ensure consistent, high-quality education, the strengthening of regulatory bodies and accreditation mechanisms, and the provision of adequate clinical exposures for nursing students.

Col. Dhall and other experts emphasized the importance of competitive compensation packages to attract and retain nursing talent. Additionally, they advocated for the promotion of nursing research and evidence-based practice, strategic workforce planning to address shortages in various specialties and regions, and the provision of mental health support for nurses dealing with high-stress healthcare environments.

Prof (Dr) Bimla Kapoor, a Member of the Board of Studies and Examiner of undergraduate, postgraduate, and PhD in Nursing at several universities, supported the call for comprehensive policy changes. Ms. Thankam Gomez, Founder & CEO of Cygnia Healthcare, highlighted various challenges facing the nursing sector in India, including a shortage of qualified nurses, inadequate infrastructure and resources, low wages, a lack of standardization in nursing education, and a heavy workload.

NURSICON, as a global platform, serves to facilitate idea exchange and keep nursing professionals updated on the latest innovations in care and education. Col. Dhall's insights and those of other experts underscored the need for collaborative efforts and robust policy measures to ensure a capable and resilient nursing sector capable of meeting the global healthcare needs of diverse populations.



CME - INDIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (IMA) SONIPAT, HARYANA



RGCIRC organized a CME program in association with Indian Medical Association (IMA), Sonipat on Saturday, 30th September 2023 at Hotel Cozette, Fazilpur, Sonipat, Haryana. Dr. Sandeep Jain, Sr. Consultant – Pediatric Hemato Oncology & BMT delivered a lecture on **Role of Physicians in Management of Childhood Cancer** and Dr. Pankaj Goyal, Consultant - Medical Oncology spoke on **Recent Updates in Breast Cancer Management**.

The audience was thoroughly impressed by the insights shared and the depth of knowledge displayed by the speakers. The IMA Sonipat members expressed their gratitude towards the RGCIRC faculty and extended a warm welcome to them and other team members from RGCIRC and promised to continue their support for RGCIRC.

Date of Printing: 25th November 2023

Date of Publishing: 30th November 2023

Posted at: Ashok Vihar, Head Post Office, Delhi - 110052

Register with Registrar of Newspaper Under No.68797/1998

Postal Department Registration No. DL(N)/004/2021-23

Licensed to Post without Prepayment Under No.: "U"(DN)-162/2022-23

27TH FOUNDATION DAY OF RGCIRC

Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre celebrated its 27th Foundation Day. The celebration was held on Saturday, 28th November 2023 at Hotel Crowne Plaza, Rohini. It was attended by more than 1200 RGCIRC family members including Governing Council and Management Committee members along with Directors, Sr. Consultants and other employees.

Lauding the efforts and long services, outstanding performances, best outsourced workers were felicitated on Pre-Foundation Day on Friday, 27th October 2022 at Indraprastha Hall, RGCIRC.

As per the tradition, the cultural programme was organized, which was very well appreciated and celebrated with great enthusiasm and high spirits.

RGCIRC honoured our senior consultants who have completed more than 25 years with RGCIRC: Dr. P. S. Choudhury, Director - Nuclear Medicine.

This was followed by Chairman's appreciation award, Best Resident award, Clinical IT implementation award, best ward and Master of ceremony award.



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Research Centre, D-18, Sector - 5,
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Printed and Published by Mr. Pramod Maheshwari on behalf of Indraprastha Cancer Society and Research Centre and printed at R. R. Enterprises, 18 - A, Old Gobind Pura Ext., Street No. 2, Parwana Road, Delhi - 110051, Tel: +91- 8447494107, Published from Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre, D - 18, Sector - 5, Rohini, Delhi - 110085

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