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Cancer Task Force recommends guidelines for Cancer Care

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The Task Force met with the objective of identifying optimal treatment for head and neck cancer, based on existing evidence on best outcomes among Indian patients.



The Oral Cancer Task Force, an expert committee comprising leading oncologists from all over India, recently presented their recommendations to create guidelines for the management of head and neck cancer.

Head and neck cancer, which includes oral cancer, has been a major public health issue in India for several decades.

The Convenor of the Task Force and Founder and Managing Trustee of **Biocon Foundation**, **Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw** said, “Given that a third of oral cancer cases in the world are reported in India, it is a huge opportunity for our country to be at the forefront, both in the areas of policy-making and therapeutic innovation. We should not be restricted to the low end of the spectrum but go beyond, to research in epidemiology, genetics and all that goes with diagnosis and treatment. We should aspire to achieve the best outcomes for head and neck cancer with new discoveries coming out of translational research, technologies and approaches like bio-specific antibodies and checkpoint inhibitors to drive the best possible treatment. Our aim should be to move from cancer care to cancer cure.”

Although, there are global guidelines for the management of head and neck cancer, India with its huge head and neck cancer burden has several demographic and genetic peculiarities, which require focus and specific therapeutic guidelines. The Task Force met with the objective of identifying optimal treatment for head and neck cancer, based on existing evidence on best outcomes among Indian patients.

Dr. G K Rath, Head, National Cancer Institute, **AIIMS**, and the Chair of the meeting said, “Every patient has the right to receive ideal and optimal care, and healthcare should be made accessible to all. We should be able to offer both the ideal and optimal approaches to our patients.”

This consortium of 24 eminent oncologists, also included Dr. Pankaj Chaturvedi and Dr. Kumar Prabhash, from the **Tata Memorial Hospital**, Mumbai, Dr. K Govind Babu, **Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology**, Bengaluru and, Dr. Munish Gairola and Dr. Manish Singhal from Delhi.

Dr. Kumar Prabhash said, “What we follow are Western guidelines. There is a need for developing our own India specific guidelines.”

His colleague from the Tata Memorial Hospital, **Dr. Pankaj Chaturvedi** added, “While addressing India specific needs, there are still many unanswered questions and research should be encouraged. We should pursue those research proposals actively and be at the forefront of research in the global space.”

Dr. Govind Babu said: “While arriving at a consensus on the management of head and neck cancer is of utmost importance, it is equally demanding to focus on prevention and early detection. All stakeholders need to participate in spreading awareness and saying no to tobacco,” he said.

The Oral Cancer Task Force has laid down recommendations for the management of head and neck cancer. The document will be released soon to help physicians and patients in establishing the best healthcare solutions for head and neck cancer patients in India.