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Cancer Care: The New Dynamics

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Dr. Gaurav Thukral, COO, HealthCare atHOME shares his views on Cancer Care at Home



Uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells that destroy the normal tissue of the body with the ability to migrate from their site of origin is called cancer.If diagnosed, early cancer can be treated.However, lack of awareness among masses often results in late diagnosis, which is followed by a bad prognosis. Every cancer is different and making masses aware of each one of them may not practically possible, however, awareness regarding some common warning signs and regular screening can help in early diagnosis and better prognosis.

Prevention is better than cure, a cliché that still holds true. Sadly, there are no guaranteed methods to prevent cancer, however, healthy eating habits, regular exercise, vaccinations against hepatitis B & HPV might reduce the risk.

A cancer diagnosis is challenging for the person as well as his family. The person often goes into denial and questions his destiny. There are high chances of the patient going in depression in lack of emotional support. Support from family and counselling often helps the patients to accept the situation. Once diagnosed, the next step is a selection of the treatment approach. Cancer can be managed surgically, medically or as a combination of both depending on the type and extent of cancer.Non-surgical approaches include chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

Care at Home

Technological and medical advancements have made it possible to deliver 70% of hospital care in the comfort of home and cancer management is no exception. Taking a step further Healthcare atHome is providing services like screening breast and cervical cancer at home.Cancer is a disease that carries a fear factor with it and people are often confused about cancer treatment at home; therefore it becomes very important to understand that what can be expected at home. Except for surgical management and radiotherapy, every other aspect of cancer care starting from counselling to chemotherapy can be availed at home.

- Pre and Post surgical care: When a surgical approach is selected for the cancer management, the patient has to attain a level of health before undergoing the surgery. After surgery, the patient needs regular wound dressing and medical care. Both pre- and post-surgical care can be managed at home.
- Rehydration therapy: Patients undergoing cancer treatment can get dehydrated easily. Chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or surgery can be challenging for your body’s digestive system and vomiting and diarrhoea are common, which can be easily managed under care at home.
- Nutrition: Nutrition management is also an important aspect of cancer treatment. Nutrition during cancer management does not simply mean eating healthy but it has a therapeutic value. Diet under the care of qualified nutritionist can be followed at home.
- Palliative care: When all the treatment options are exhausted theonly option left is to provide palliative care, which is targeted towards pain management, symptom management, and improving quality of life.

Why Care at Home?

Cancer treatment is consuming not only physically but also financially.

- **Cost effective**: Care at home provides cost-effective access to cancer management at home. Patient saves on admission charges, room charges, and even on medicine. Healthcare atHome(HCAH) provides medicines to its patients at a discounted price, which is often not possible in hospital set-ups.
- **Emotional support** is one of the important aspects of cancer management and studies have proven time and again that people recover faster at home than a hospital.
- **Prevention from hospital-acquired infections**Cancer management results in decreased immunity and patients are often exposed to hospital-acquired When managed at home, hospital-acquired infections can be avoided.
- **At-par quality**: Technological advancements have changed the dynamics of the healthcare in the recent past. Portable equipment and video-conferencing have made it possible to deliver healthcare at home even for a disease like cancer without compromising on quality. The concept is fairly established in the Western world; however, it is still in the infantile phase in India.To address the quality concerns outside hospitals, Quality and Accreditation Institute put forth guidelines for the home healthcare companies in an effort to standardise their services, and HCAH became the first home healthcare company to be awarded the accreditation.

Future of Cancer Care at Home

Cancer care at home has already become popular because of its economic and emotional advantages. However, it still stays out of the reach of people who depend on government schemes and insurance for their management. Time has come when government and insurance companies should evaluate their stand over cancer management at home.