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HCG puts focus on psychological care for cancer patients

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Unmet psychological needs of cancer patients have huge clinical implications



On World Mental Health Day, HCG – The specialist in cancer care organised a session to bring about conscious awareness and highlight the importance to facilitate professional psychological assistance to cancer patients and their families.

According to the 2019 report Cancer patients have a 4-fold risk of suicide compared to the general population. There is also a two-fold increase since a previous study in 2002. This risk is potentially preventable if we address the psychological needs of cancer patients and their families. Unfortunately to meet this crying need we have only about 25-30 psycho-oncologists in India! Unmet psychological needs of cancer patients have huge clinical implications: patients drop out of treatment, have poor tolerance to treatment and treatment outcomes, including the high risk of suicide and survivorship. Therefore, International agencies such as International Psycho-oncology Society (IPOS), UICC including WHO has endorsed the emotional well-being of cancer patients as the 6th vital sign and recommend integrating Psycho-oncology into mainstream cancer care.

Dr. Brindha Sitaram, Group Director, Psycho-oncology Service said, “Cancer brings with it tremendous psychological distress to cancer patients and their families. Nearly 3 out of 5 Cancer patients experience severe psychological distress warranting professional psychological intervention. A nationwide study in India showed that nearly 92% of cancer patients experience psychological distress of varying magnitude. Psycho-oncology addresses the Psychological issues and concerns of cancer patients and their families and must be integrated into mainstream cancer care.

Dr. B. S. Ajaikumar, Chairman & CEO, HealthCare Global Enterprises Limited addressing on World Mental Health Day said, “Cancer not only affects the body but also have a profound psychological impact like anxiety and depression throughout the cancer journey and beyond. Cancer care professionals need to address the emotional needs of their patients and refer them to qualified mental health professionals. Early detection of emotional difficulties of patients can lead to a better quality of life and treatment outcomes.”

In India, to meet this ultimate objective, it is imperative that the professional care providers (Oncologists, Nurses, Mental health professionals) must be sensitized to emotional needs of cancer patients and de-stigmatize the psychological needs for cancer patients and their families.