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Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals reports 50% drop in paediatric cancer diagnosis

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The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on timely diagnosis and treatment of chronic diseases for over ten months now. Preventive care for diseases like cancer is one of the worst-hit especially among children with cancer and chronic blood disorders.

Their conditions have now progressed towards advanced stage of cancer. It is estimated that every year over 60,000 children between below 18 year of age are detected with cancer and while mortality rate in child cancers is very low (if diagnosed and treated in the early stages), fear of COVID-19 in the past year has forced people to delay treatment of children undergoing cancer/anti-cancer therapies.

As we celebrate World Cancer Day 2021 on 4 February, experts at Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals report a 50 per cent decline in the diagnosis of cancer in children at early stages and also a dip in patients who were showing early symptoms over telecalls that did not report to the tertiary care centres.

Dr Gaurav Kharya, Clinical Lead, Centre for Bone Marrow Transplant and Cellular Therapy & Senior Consultant, Paediatric Haematology, Oncology and Immunology, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi, said, “The pandemic literally brought the world to a standstill and paediatric cancers are no exception to this. We saw a drop in the number of cases. Even the cases who were suspected or diagnosed at the periphery and were referred to paediatric oncology setups for further care did not report to the tertiary care centres due to pandemic fear.”