


Your Guide To Cancer Care

Compiled and Edited

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LIST OF CONTENTS

	Page No.
Acknowledgement	
Foreword	
Introduction	
1. What is cancer?	14
2. Danger signals of cancer	15
3. Common types of cancer	17
3.1 Blood Cancer	17
3.2 Breast Cancer	24
3.3 Cervix Cancer	34
3.4 Colorectal Cancer	40
3.5 Lung Cancer	43
3.6 Oral cancer	54
3.7 Ovaries Cancer	57
3.8 Pancreatic Cancer	61
3.9 Prostate Cancer	66
3.10 Skin cancer	70
4. Other types of cancer – A brief description	75
4.1 Bladder Cancer	75
4.2 Bone Cancer	75
4.3 Brain Cancer	75
4.4 Bowel Cancer	76
4.5 Cheek Cancer	77
4.6 Gall bladder Cancer	77
4.7 Liver Cancer	78
4.8 Lymph node Cancer	78
4.9 Male sex organ Cancer	78
4.10 Thyroid Cancer	79
5. Frequently Asked Questions [FAQ] in Cancer care	80
5.1 Diagnostic testing for cancer detection	80
5.2 Role of Communicating in cancer care	81
5.3 Things you can do to reduce your cancer risk and feel better	82
5.4 Crisis Management in coping up with cancer	83
5.5 Family History and Cancer Risk	84
5.6 Dental Care while living with cancer	86
5.7 Common Types of Cancer Treatments	88
5.8 Role of Caregiver in Cancer care	90
5.9 Role of Oncology nurse in cancer care	90
5.10 General guidelines for cancer care	91
5.11 Diet/nutrition & health guidelines for cancer care	92
5.12 Understanding multiple myeloma	100
5.13 Smoking habit, nicotine dependence and cancer care	101
5.14 Effect of music in cancer care	104
5.15 Gene profiles - Cracking the cancer code in future	104
5.16 Role of radiation therapy in breast cancer care	105
5.17 Prostate cancer and related poor bladder control and anxiety	107
5.18 Understanding chemotherapy and its side effects and effectiveness	108
5.19 Importance of communications and probable question to ask your doctor/ nurse in cancer care	111
5.20 Understanding your blood count in cancer care	114
5.21 Directory of tips to know in cancer care	115
5.22 Sexuality and cancer care	121
5.23 Pain control in cancer care	122
5.24 Cancer facts for women	123
5.25 The Dying experience – A road map / guidelines	128
5.26 Palliative Care in cancer therapy	132
❖ Concluding Remarks	133
Appendix	
❖ Cancer terms	134
❖ List of references	147

FOREWORD

The global burden of cancer is fast increasing. Whereas one crore of people die of this disease now every year in the world, this is likely to double in the next 15 years. In India there will be 25 lakh cancer patients at a point of time. Our cancer rates are also growing 5% every year. It is likely to grow much faster soon because of the changing life styles, increase in tobacco consumption and other environmental factors. Infections such as HIV/AIDS are also major contributory factors.

Cancer is a disease which can easily be prevented. More than 50% of cancer in men in India are tobacco related. Tobacco remains the most avoidable cancer risk. In the last century approximately 10 crore people have died due to tobacco related diseases. Half of all regular smokers die due to the habit prematurely.

The lifestyles of people especially diet, is changing rapidly. People are consuming more of meat and fats in their food and less of vegetables and fruits. The WHO has clearly demonstrated that vegetable and fruit consumption reduce the risk of cancer.

Physical exercise is another factor which has been proved to reduce the cancer risk. The risk for breast cancer, colon cancer and prostate cancer could be brought down by regular physical exercise for more than 30 minutes every day.

Almost 20% of the cancer in the world are caused by different kinds of infection. Cancers of the uterine cervix which is due to HPV virus infection from men can be prevented with the same strategy used in the prevention of HIV.

The risk factors for cancer and other non communicable diseases like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, respiratory disease, hypertension and stroke are the same. Governments should evolve a common strategy for the control of all risk factors of non communicable diseases such as tobacco use, physical inactivity, lack of consumption of vegetables and fruits, obesity, which have been found to be common risk factors.

To achieve cure from cancer the disease has to be detected in an early stage. The strategy used in the west for early detection of breast and cervical cancer is cancer screening. Unfortunately this is too expensive and the medical system in India is too disorganized to support such major screening programmes. Hence health promotion should be our strategy. The people should be taught about the early warning signals of cancer and motivated to undergo physical examination to detect their cancer.

Quite few cancer patients may suffer from disease which is incurable. For them palliative care is only option. At this point of time there are at least 1½ million cancer patients in terminal stages in our country of cancer. Their main symptom is pain. Their pain can be relieved only with morphine. Hence irrespective of the government regulations there should be a mechanism to supply morphine to all patients with pain.

Only during the last 25 years the mechanisms of carcinogenesis, metastasis and targets for treatment have been identified. It will soon be possible to develop a number of new drugs which will eradicate cancer either in combination with chemotherapy or radiotherapy or by itself. It is quite possible that nanotechnology will also

advance during the next 10 or 15 years. This will make targeting and 'cancer cell kill' more easy and less expensive. We can hope that cancer research will bring in compassion and access to all cancer patients throughout the world.

"Your Guide to Cancer Care" is a comprehensive book on cancer written in simple language, understandable equally to the medical professional and the common man with appropriate emphasis on facts wherever required, giving hints on usefulness of lifestyle modification, early warning signals and appropriate therapy. This book apart from being a guide to general public can even be useful to general practitioners, non oncology specialist doctors, undergraduate students and postgraduates in all specialities to get the general facts about cancer. It will also be useful to post graduate and undergraduate students in nursing, para medical personnel, lab and radiology technicians and a host of medical professionals. To give this book the widest circulation a suitable publisher should be chosen who will be able to sell this book through all major outlets. I wish this "Guide on Cancer Care" a major success in not only sales but also in the fight against cancer with knowledge. I congratulate the authors for producing this detailed book very meticulously.

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(Recipient of 'Padmashree' from President of India)