Cancer becoming a chronic disease not a death sentence!!

Deepti Shukla Misra

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Dear Sir,

The paradigm in perception of cancer is beginning to change due to advent of modern treatment modalities. The diagnosis of carcinoma is no more a death sentence, rather a challenge to fight with the help of different modalities of treatment to live a lovable and normal life for a long time in general and almost full life in many. Comparatively mortality is higher in heart diseases and road accidents. This has been possible because of awareness, prevention and screening programmes, newer diagnostic tools, multi modality treatments, counseling with better follow-up and rehabilitation.

More than 20 millions new cases of cancer have been diagnosed around the world in 2007 and India alone has about half a million new patients. Overall mortality is less with better survival now than two decades back. In developed countries only awareness and surveillance has resulted in early diagnosis of most of the cancers with higher cure rate. In developing countries like India, oral cancer and carcinoma cervix form the majority of cancer with overall dismal performance because of late diagnosis due to poor awareness and surveillance program. However in India NGO's with the help of government and other organisation have come forward in Tobacco Control Programme, Pap Smear Surveillance programme, and if properly implemented can change the cancer scenario here as well. All over the world, no smoking, controlled alcohol, hepatitis B and HPV vaccination, change of diet, screening colonoscopy, mammography, improved environment in factories and cities, has helped in controlling cancer to a great extent.

Genetics role in cancer is well documented. Cytogenetics and molecular biology investigative tools will be available for most of the cancers in future. Various genetics and advance molecular techniques will also help in prediction, early diagnosis and guide in planning treatment of cancer.

Surgery has come a long way from extended radical to organ preservation procedures with the help of other modalities specifically in breast, bone tumors, colon, stomach and kidney cancers.

Chemotherapeutical research regarding cell kinetics, gene mutation, anti angiogenesis nuclear hypoxia as well as molecular degeneration has resulted in many newer drugs effectively controlling the diseases alone or in combination primarily in carcinomas of breast, colon, lung, kidney, head and neck, along with various sarcomas and lymphomas. Leukemia's out look is dramatically changing for better. Bone marrow transplants and cutting edge therapy has made few types of leukemia's curable now.

Adjuvant Chemotherapeutic agents like Trastuzumab (Breast), Bevacizumab (Lung and Colorectal), Lenalidomide (Myelodysplastic syndrome), Temozolomide (glioblastoma), in association with Surgery has improved survival remarkably in most of the cancers .

Radiation used to be the treatment for cancer initially with many side effects and resulted in poor quality of life. With newer advancements in radiation technology and monitoring system, efficient, precise and accurate delivery of radiation to target organs has ensured better cure with good quality of life. More then 50% cancer gets benefit with radiation alone or in combination with other modalities. Research to sensitize cancer cells to effective radiation cure is fast progressing.

Advances in cancer research has shown new hypothesis like molecular pathway and switches, genetics obliterations, signal transduction and genetic engineering to help conquer cancer is near future.

(Dr) D. S. Misra (✉)
Histopathologist
B.L. Kapur Memorial Hospital,
New Delhi
India

M.D. Anderson, Cancer Institute (1941-life saving-life changing care), the leading cancer center at Houston U.S.A. has its motto as – “To us people are more than just their cancer symptom. Compassion – along with innovative cancer treatment, cutting edge cancer research, comprehensive education and research-based, prevention of both common

and rare cancers – has earned the gratitude of countless adult and pediatric cancer patients and their families.”

People are looking forward with hope to get cure from cancer. Future is bright, it needs a comprehensive dedicated approach to change patient’s future by insightful and compassionate doctors and para medical staff.