

Access to Health and Breast Cancer Awareness and Screening Camps in Rural India

Gunjan Bhardwaj

European Business School Oestrich-Winkel, Germany

Cancer is a term used to describe a disease in which abnormal cells grow out of control. There are over 100 diseases that classify as cancer. Cancer cells can invade, or grow into, other tissues and form tumors. Cancer may spread, but it is always named for the place where it started. For example, cancer that starts in the breast is called breast cancer. Cancer can be a complex topic for some to understand. According to the World Health Organization, at least one-third of all cancer cases are preventable. Take a free Cancer Risk Test to identify behaviors that may lead to cancer and ways to reduce your risk. Tobacco use is the single greatest avoidable risk for cancer mortality worldwide. Tobacco is linked to many types of cancer, including cancers of the lung, esophagus, larynx, mouth, throat, kidney, bladder, pancreas, stomach, and cervix. If you use tobacco products and want to quit, help is available. Contact the Student Wellness and Engagement office to learn more about tobacco cessation. Research suggests that the risk of cancer increases with the amount of alcohol consumed. Some people think that certain types of alcohol are "safer" than others, but this is not true because ethanol is found in all alcoholic drinks (i.e., beer, wine, liquor, and spirits). When looking at the link between alcohol and cancer, the amount of alcohol that is drunk over time, not the type of drink, appears to be the most important factor in raising cancer risk. It is recommended by multiple sources that you limit your alcohol intake to no more than two drinks per day for men and one drink a day for women. For more information on alcohol, contact the Student Wellness and Engagement office. Regular physical activity will considerably reduce cancer risk, as there is a link between overweight and obesity to many types of cancers. Physical activity is anything that gets you moving! The CDC recommends that adults get 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week. For some, it may sound like a lot, but you can accomplish this goal by taking a 10-minute walk, three times a day, five days a week. To learn more, read the CDC's Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. Diet (what you eat or don't eat) is linked to some types of cancers, but the exact reasons are not yet clear. The American Cancer Society recommends the following diet, to help lower cancer risk: Fresh vegetables and fruits, Whole grains over refined grains and sugars, Limited red meat (i.e., beef, pork, and lamb) Limited processed meat (i.e., bacon, deli meat, and hot dogs) To find cancer early, while it's small and before it has spread, adults should have regular tests called screening exams. These tests help your medical provider find common cancers before they cause symptoms. Talk to your medical provider about which screening tests might be right for you. If cancer is found early, it can be easier to treat. Survival also tends to be longer for those with early cancer.

In India, the incidence of cancer is increasing rapidly; therefore

it is important to step up cancer literacy and knowledge amongst the population. We hope that this will lead to early detection which is important in the management and treatment of cancer and also prevention by making necessary changes in lifestyle. Breast Cancer is rapidly rising amongst women in urban areas and it is the most common cancer in India. Early detection is essential in its management and treatment. Due to ignorance, fear, and social stigma many women present with stage III or IV cancer which requires surgery and extensive treatment. If detected early, then in most cases there will be less aggressive treatment and better chances of recovery. Cervical Cancer is the second most common cancer among women in India. It is the only preventable cancer and it can be detected in the pre - cancerous phase and cured. Oral and Lung cancers are highest among men and women in the urban as well as rural population and these can also be prevented to a large extent. Therefore, making people aware of the dangers of chewing tobacco and smoking is of great importance. Breast cancer is the most common cancer of urban Indian women and the second most common in rural women. Owing to lack of awareness of the disease in India and in absence of breast cancer screening programs, majority of breast cancers are diagnosed at a relatively advanced stage. Government agencies, NGOs and charity organizations have put great emphasis on improved breast cancer awareness among masses for promotion of early detection, providing comprehensive treatment module, providing support for breast cancer management and for screening and rehabilitation. In rural areas, there is still a lack of good health care and awareness among masses regarding the importance of early breast cancer screening and thus cases of late diagnosis are more prevalent. The other common factors that lead to late diagnosis include delays on the part of womenfolk of rural areas to seek advice for a recognized health problem which is mainly due to financial reasons, social/cultural reasons such as general inhibition of women to see the doctor for breast ailments, general scare of people towards cancer like disorders and a general indifference of women towards their health. In rural areas Illiteracy is widespread and also people are inhibited and not motivated to come to the hospitals for screening/check up. Considering various factors of cancer incidence rate, to address the most common barriers such as lower cancer literacy, lesser availability and accessibility of proper medical facilities, three Indian states were shortlisted to initiate the project "ECHO" by organizing Breast Cancer Awareness and Screening Programs for Rural and Semi-Urban Indian Population. In addition to being a CSR approach, Project ECHO also increased the cancer literacy amongst the rural population and emphasized on health education, early diagnosis of breast cancers and more public facilities for breast cancer treatments.

Note: This work is partially presented at 23rd International Conference on Cancer Research & Pharmacology during March 26-27, 2018 at Edinburgh, Scotland