

Short Communication**I Am and I Will - Together We Can Fight Cancer**

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Cancer is defined as the uncontrolled growth and spread of abnormal cells in the body. Though our body has a mechanism within itself of identifying and destroying the abnormal cells thereby preventing the development of cancer, sometimes these mechanisms fail, thereby resulting in the growth of the abnormal cells in any part of the body. Cancer has no boundaries; it can occur anywhere in the body and at any age.

According to the Global cancer data (GLOBOCAN 2018), the global cancer burden is 18.1 million and accounts for 9.6 million deaths. Cancer is the second leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for approximately 17-18 death every second, i.e. 26302 deaths in a day. In both sexes combined, lung cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer (11.6%) and the leading cause of cancer death (18.4 %), closely followed by female breast cancer (11.6%). It is quite clear from these numbers that cancer is a major issue today.

There is no single cause that can be attributed to cancer, many factors add up increasing the risk of individuals developing cancer. 5 to 10 % of all cancers are hereditary .i.e. runs in the family. The most common among these is Hereditary Breast Ovarian Cancer Syndrome associated with BRCA1/BRCA2 mutations. The rest of 90-95% of the cancers are due to either environmental and lifestyle issues including air pollution, 2nd hand smoke, industrial pollution, smoking, obesity, lack of exercise, a diet high in fat and low in vegetables and fruits, alcohol intake, etc.

The steps that can be taken to prevent cancer include avoiding tobacco smoking and chewing, avoiding alcohol intake/limiting alcohol intake, doing daily exercise, taking a healthy diet more with fruits and vegetables, drinking lots of water. These small steps can help you preventing cancer to an extend, though these will not give you 100 % protection. As the saying goes, PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE. So any steps taken towards preventing cancer, though small, are very important.



However, despite all these measures, a person can still develop cancer. So the next important aspect is to detect cancer early, since if caught early and treated aptly, cancer is curable. Screening plays an important role in the early detection of cancer. Screening for cancer in simple terms is checking your body for cancer before you have symptoms. As per the guidelines defined by various bodies around the world, screening for certain cancers should be done from a particular age with specific recommended tests. For example, breast cancer screening should start from 40-50 years with a mammogram every 1-2 years. Similarly, for different sites, the age of onset of screening and tests required for screening vary.

One more step that can be taken to detect cancer early is to report to your physician or family doctor if any symptoms like altered bowel habits, a lump in the breast, blood in sputum or stools or urine, non-healing oral ulcer, difficulty in swallowing, any swelling in the body, etc, persisting for longer than normal. Based on the symptoms that the patient presents, the investigations to be done may differ. The fact that cancer can be cured if detected early should be kept in mind.

Once a patient has been diagnosed with cancer, the next important step is ACCEPTANCE. Acceptance simply means that you have made peace with your diagnosis and are ready to put all your energy into fighting the disease. A positive attitude can motivate cancer patients to take better care of themselves following a diagnosis, such people are more likely to eat, exercise regularly, stop smoking, and practice other helpful behaviors. Support from family and friends is very much needed during this time. Once detected to have cancer, treatment is based on the site of cancer and stage. Usually, the treatment will be a combination of surgery, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy, the sequence of these may vary depending on the stage and site of the tumor.

Since 2000, the 4th of February every year is celebrated as WORLD CANCER DAY. This is a global uniting initiative led by Union for International Cancer Control (UICC). The theme for World Cancer Day 2021 is `I AM and I WILL`. This year is a reminder of the enduring power of cooperation and collective action. When we choose to come together, we can achieve what we all wish for: a healthier brighter world without cancer. Small steps like changing our lifestyle, having a healthy balanced diet, making exercise part of daily routine, avoiding adverse habits, etc can help to wipe out cancer.

**TOGETHER ALL OUR ACTIONS MATTER.**

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