

SURVEY BY TATA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

'Knowing cancer treatment plan reduces patients' anxiety'

HT Correspondent

■ htformeto@hindustantimes.com

MUMBAI: The earlier a cancer patient learns about their treatment plan, the better it is for them to cope with anxiety, according to a survey conducted by doctors at the Parel-based Tata Memorial Hospital.

The findings showed a 97% reduction in anxiety among cancer patients if an expert opinion was given to them within a day or two. Whereas, there was an 83% reduction in anxiety when the opinion was given in three days or more.

A total of 701 patients, who had taken expert opinions through Tata Memorial Hospital's online expert opinion service, Navya, participated in the survey. The findings by TMH were recently presented at the San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium in Brazil.

"It looks like every single day's delay in receiving an expert opinion on the treatment matters to the patients and significantly increases their anxiety. The findings suggest that knowing what to do early on, alleviates a lot of anxiety among the patients," said Gitika Srivastava, founder of Navya.

Dr Sudeep Gupta, deputy director, Advanced Centre for Treatment, Research and Education in Cancer (ACTREC),

701 PATIENTS GAVE FEEDBACK ONLINE

- Tata Memorial Hospital's online expert opinion service is called Navya
- A total of 701 patients, who had taken expert opinions through Navya, participated in the survey
- It was started in 2015 to bridge the gap between cancer patients and specialists in India.
- Patients across the globe can upload test reports, which are reviewed by doctors at TMH who give their opinions.
- So far, 26,000 patients have taken expert opinions through

Navya

- According to data given by TMH, in India there are only 1,600 oncologists for three million cancer patients, indicating that a large number of patients may not have access to treatment at all
- Dr Sudeep Gupta, professor of medical oncology, TMH, said that cancer treatment is expensive and that diagnosis at an advanced stage inevitably means that the cost of care will rise substantially. About, 60% of all cancers in India are diagnosed at an advanced stage

who was associated with the survey, said that getting unreliable opinions is often a major cause of worry among patients and relatives.

Gupta further said, "It adds to the stress and anxiety of a patient if he does not get information fast enough from a reliable source."

Gupta added that once the patient has the right information, it helps them chart their treatment plan and seek required help.

Dr Shalaka Joshi, surgical oncologist, TMH, said that anxiety plays a huge part in dealing with cancer.

"Before we started the online service for giving opinions, patients would come to TMH from the most remote places, just to get an opinion. This would delay the process of starting treatment by days," she said.

Srivastava said that findings reiterate Navya's model of getting back to patients with an opinion within two days from the time they upload the reports.

"Most places abroad have a turnaround time of seven to ten days to give expert second opinions to patients," Srivastava further said.