

## Cancer cases in India

### Why in news?

A recent study warned that the number of people who have cancer expected to rise exponentially over the next two decades, with India as the cancer capital of the world.

### What are the key findings of the study?

#### Key Findings

- **Non-communicable diseases** - The study found that Non Communicable Diseases comprised 63% of all deaths in India.
- **Rise in numbers** - India recorded 13.9 lakh cancer cases in 2020 and the number is set to rise to 15.7 lakh by 2025, a 13% increase in 5 years.
- **Vulnerable**- Those suffering cancer are also tend to skew younger. Around 30% of colon cancer patients in India are under the age of 50.
- **New cases** - Around 10 lakh new cases of cancer are diagnosed in India each year. Of these, around 4% are children.
- **Low screening** - Despite these facts and figures, cancer screening in India remains an afterthought. Just 1.9% of people are screened for breast cancer in India.
- A mere 0.9% of people are screened for cervical cancer in India. That number is 73% in the US, 70% in the UK, and 43% in China.

### What is cancer?

- Cancer is a disease where cells grow uncontrollably and spread to other parts of the body.
- **Common type of cancers** - Breast, cervix, and ovarian cancer are the most common forms of cancer affecting women and among men, they are lung cancer, mouth cancer, and prostate cancer.

*World Cancer Day is observed every year on February 4. In India, November 7 is considered the National Cancer Awareness Day.*

- **Leading site of cancers**-
  - Male- Lung cancer
  - Female- Breast cancer
  - Childhood (0-14 year)- Lymphoid leukaemia (boys- 29.2% and girls- 24.2%)

### What are the factors contributing cancer?

- **Tobacco use** - Smoking and secondhand smoke exposure are the most significant risk factor for cancer.

- **Obesity** - Being overweight or obese increases the risk of 13 types of cancer.
- **Climate change** - Climate change with exposure to ultraviolet radiation, air pollution etc.,
- **Human papillomavirus (HPV)** - HPV causes almost all cervical cancers and several other types of cancer.
- **Other factors** - Advancing age, Unhealthy diets, Immunosuppression, Radiation and Genetic disorders.

*At present, 1 in 3 Indians is pre-diabetic, 2 in 3 are pre-hypertensive, and 1 in 10 struggles with depression.*

### **What are the challenges?**

- **Shortage of facilities** - There is a shortage of pediatric oncology facilities in the country, particularly in government-run hospitals. Only 41% of public hospitals have dedicated pediatric oncology departments.
- **Lack of funds** - A lack of funds and access to care, as well as social stigma, are big hurdles for many affected families.
- **Infrastructure deficit** - Diagnosis, access to care and medications and follow-up are difficult and there is a lot of abandonment of treatment as the parents cannot afford treatment.
- **Low screening rates** - It poses a significant challenge for the fight against cancer, and stressed the importance of preventive health care measures.

### **Steps taken by government to mitigate cancer in India**

- **National Cancer Control Program (NCCP)** - To reduce cancer deaths and cases, and improve the quality of life of cancer patients, launched in 1974.
- **Health Minister's Cancer Patient Fund (HMCPF)** - This fund provides up to Rs 2 Lakhs in assistance to patients living below the poverty line who are receiving cancer treatment at one of 27 Regional Cancer Centers (RCCs).
- **National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS)** - It set up NCD Clinics at the district and CHC levels to provide early diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up services for common NCDs.
- **National Cancer Institute** - It is a state-of-the-art Tertiary Cancer care cum Research Institute constructed at the AIIMS Jhajjar campus.
- **Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital & Research Centre, Punjab**- It aims to provide world class cancer care to the residents of Punjab and neighboring states and union territories (UTs).
- **Centre for Integrative Oncology**- It has been established as a joint venture of All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) and National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research (NICPR-ICMR) with the intention of collaborative research activities in cancer.
- **Koita Centre for Digital Oncology**- It has been established by the *National Cancer Grid (NCG)* to promote use of digital technologies and tools to improve cancer care across India.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)** - Chemotherapy and Radiotherapy packages, along with surgical oncology are covered as part of cancer treatment in the empanelled hospitals under the scheme.
- **Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centers (AB-HWCs)**- Screening of 3 common cancers i.e. oral, breast and cervical, along with other common NCDs, is an integral part of service delivery under the AB-HWCs.
- **Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY)**- Significant focus on Oncology in its various aspects has been ensured in the new AIIMS that are being established under the program.
- **Strengthening of Tertiary Care for Cancer Scheme**- It is implemented by Central government to enhance the facilities for tertiary care of cancer.
- **CERVAVAC**- India has launched its first indigenously developed vaccine, "CERVAVAC" for the prevention of cervical cancer.
- **NexCAR19 CAR-T therapy**- It is India's first indigenously Made-in-India CAR-T therapy which is the world's most affordable CAR-T therapy and it puts India firmly on the global map of advanced cell and gene therapy.

### What lies ahead?

- The government should incentivize screening as a first measure and support research activities for cancer detection and treatment.
- There is also a need for policies to impart financial protection and expand the screening and curative services for cancer.
- Government funds should be increased via schemes to access the health care effectively and awareness about the cancers should be wide spread to control the numbers in future.

### References

1. [Indian Express- Why are cancer cases soaring in India?](#)

2. [PIB- Strengthening cancer care in India](#)

