

83% of cancer patients in India not on right treatment path, finds study

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Bengaluru: A study by Onco.com, the world’s first online cancer care platform, has come up with startling findings about the treatment being given to cancer patients in India. It found that over 15% of patients were getting completely wrong treatment, 27% were not being given the right chemotherapy drugs, and 41% did not undergo complete tests. In fact, only 17% of patients were on the right treatment path as per international scientific guidelines. In other words, a whopping 83% patients were getting mistreated, claims the study.

As per Rashie Jain, Cofounder and CEO, Onco.com: “The purpose of the study, conducted across a six-month period with data captured by Onco.com, was to understand the adherence to international treatment protocols for cancer patients who undergo cancer treatment in India. It covered 365 patients who took online second opinion from Onco’s multi-disciplinary tumor board regarding their treatment. About 80% of these hailed from India, 10% from Africa, and 5% each from Bangladesh and the Middle-East.”

Dr Amit Jotwani, cofounder of Onco.com and a seasoned oncologist commented: “Our study

has shown that taking second opinion in the form of multi-disciplinary review by a team of doctors from three specialties – surgical, medical and radiation oncology – can dramatically improve outcomes for cancer patients. Such a review provides much-needed validation and correction in a patient’s treatment plan, thus preventing mistreatment and unnecessary treatment and optimizing costs.”

Mistreatment in medical terminology is defined as a deviation from the standard treatment protocol. It does not necessarily mean wrong treatment, but that the patient is not getting the best available treatment.

Commenting on the high rate of mistreatment among cancer patients in India found by the study, Dr Amit Jotwani explained: “Because of a lack of access to specialized doctors, most Indian patients are unable to get a multidisciplinary opinion. This affects the treatment they get, which eventually leads to poor outcomes. Cutting-edge research is happening daily in cancer, improving outcomes from new therapies and triggering changes in the standard treatment protocols. Practising doctors in India may sometimes not get the time to update themselves with the latest treatment guidelines and protocols. Such non-adherence leads to mistreatment. Another reason is that most Indian patients do not get multi-disciplinary care, so they end up getting whatever treatment advice is available to them.”

The experts say that the patients should make it a point to ask questions and ensure they are comfortable with the recommended treatment plan. It is important that they empower themselves and seek multiple opinions, if required, to validate their treatment. They should not just go with word of mouth, but always get advice from credible sources for their treatment plan.