

The Evolving Cancer Landscape in India

- Dr. Gopinath K.S

The cancer landscape in India is undergoing significant changes, shaped by the country's growing population and evolving lifestyle trends. Reflecting on the past 30 to 40 years, it's clear that while we have made tremendous strides in healthcare, these advancements have also brought new challenges. The rise of non-communicable diseases—particularly diabetes, hypertension, and cancer—has become a major concern for public health.

Focusing specifically on cancer, there is a noticeable upward trend in cases across the country. Recent data from various cancer registries in India, as well as global scan data, indicate that breast cancer remains the most prevalent cancer in metropolitan areas. In contrast, cervical cancer continues to dominate in rural areas, closely followed by breast cancer. These patterns are influenced by a range of factors, including lifestyle changes and the varying accessibility to healthcare across different regions.

As medical professionals, we must prepare not only for the increasing number of cancer cases but also for the broader impact on patients' quality of life. The challenge isn't solely about treating cancer; it's about managing the disease in a way that enhances the well-being of those affected. Our goal should be to improve cancer management practices so effectively that the need for additional cancer hospitals in the future is minimized.

One of the interesting trends we observe is the variation in cancer types between rural and urban areas. In rural regions, the higher incidence of cervical cancer can likely be attributed to hygiene issues among women. Conversely, in urban areas, the rise in breast cancer cases may be linked to lifestyle choices that are more readily accessible in metropolitan environments. These risk factors, influenced by the differing living conditions in rural versus urban settings, highlight the need for targeted cancer prevention and treatment strategies.

Another critical aspect to consider is the growing incidence of cancer among younger populations in India, which differs from the trends seen in Western countries. The availability of lifestyle amenities in urban centers could be playing a significant role in this shift. This emerging pattern underscores the urgency of understanding the root causes of cancer in younger age groups and developing early intervention strategies.

By recognizing these trends and patterns, we can better address the underlying causes of cancer and implement effective measures to reduce its incidence in both rural and urban areas. The future of cancer care in India lies not just in expanding our treatment capabilities but in enhancing our prevention and management strategies to ensure a healthier population.

Thank you for your attention to these critical issues. It is only through continued dialogue and collaboration that we can hope to effectively combat the growing cancer burden in our country.



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