

# OnChronicle

AN EXCLUSIVE NEWSLETTER OF ALAMELU CHARITABLE FOUNDATION, SUPPORTED BY TATA TRUSTS



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## Welcome Note

Dear Reader,

It's exciting to share once again yet another edition of our quarterly newsletter - OnChronicle!

Our commitment to create cancer care awareness continues through robust outreach activities, as well as through the digital platform.

**Donor Spotlight** of this issue features Tata Communications who are wholeheartedly supporting us on our cancer care journey.

The article on **Patient Navigators** highlights their role in the cancer care pathway of patients.

The **Byline on Palliative Care** gives an insight on what palliative care is about and its importance in the comprehensive health care system.

We cannot stress enough the importance of following the COVID safety protocols to protect yourselves and your near ones from the invisible monster that we continue to fight off each day.

As we sail into the festive season, we take this opportunity to wish each one of you and your families "A Very Happy, Healthy, Hopeful and Positive" season filled with much harmony and celebration.

**Take Care, Stay Safe and Happy Reading!**



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## WORLD LUNG CANCER DAY

1<sup>st</sup> August, 2021 was observed as World Lung Cancer Day. The Tata Trusts social media platforms Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube carried an array of awareness posts about lung cancer being the most fatal cancer in the world, killing millions globally and why it is important to quit smoking. Social media is a great enabler of promoting awareness, a crucial factor in the early detection and prevention of diseases.

Only you can save your lungs from cancer.

Over 80% of lung cancer cases are caused by smoking. Quit now.



# Bridging the Gap – Patient Navigators (Aarogya Sevaks)

According to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), patient navigators are staff members who work with patients to overcome barriers and understand the medical system.

In today's healthcare environment, there are several challenges that often go unaddressed. For instance, a patient may not understand where to go for treatment or even how to get there, or what is their course of treatment, how much it will cost, how they will pay for their treatment, who will look after their family when they are away, etc. Without answers to these basic questions, many patients give up.

It is at this time that a patient navigator is of utmost importance. With their expertise in handling patients' needs and their understanding of the healthcare process, patient navigators can provide those answers and ensure that patients get the timely treatment and care they need. By working directly with the patients and their families, they build a rapport and a bridge of trust. They assist patients with the logistics of their care - from managing appointments, completing medical forms, arranging for transportation and even exploring funding options.

Spotlighting our very own patient navigator from the Tirupati catchment, **Ms. Archana Boligarla** who guided a patient get timely treatment and care.

"Many beneficiaries/patients require assistance / guidance for medical consultations, diagnostic tests and following proper treatment regimen. I try my best to guide them to receive the necessary medical attention. It gives me immense happiness and satisfaction in helping these needy patients." – **Archana Boligarla, Patient Navigator, Sri Venkateswara Institute of Cancer Care and Advanced Research, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh.**

## Tirupati Catchment Impact Story :

About two years ago, 44 year old, Mrs. Jyothi Reddy (name changed) from Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh noticed a small lump in her right breast. However, she did not pay much heed to it as it was painless. However, with the passing of time, the lump started growing.

Our outreach teams regularly conduct awareness and screening camps on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and Jyothi attended one such camp, in September 2020. She underwent a clinical breast examination and a hard painless lump was found in her right breast. She was counselled by the nurse and was advised to visit the referral hospital for further diagnosis and evaluation. The patient navigator Archana Boligarla was informed about her whom she immediately contacted and counselled to proceed with further investigations. Initially, Jyothi refused,



**Ms. Archana Boligarla**

but Archana did not give up. She kept calling on her and repeatedly counselled her on the need to get diagnosed and treated. Finally, Jyothi agreed and gave in and with the assistance of Archana, visited the Sri Venkateswara Institute of Cancer Care and Advanced Research (SVICCAR) in Oct 2020. She was navigated to the OPD consultation and was advised to undergo a biopsy. Post pathology test results revealed that she had infiltrative duct cell carcinoma grade III. She was guided to the Radiation Oncologist at SVICCAR for further advice and treatment. The patient won over cancer thanks to the timely guidance and assistance of the outreach team and especially our patient navigator Ms. Archana Boligarla, who never gave up on Mrs. Jyothi Reddy.

# Donor Spotlight: Tata Communications

Tata Communications is a digital ecosystem enabler that powers today's fast-growing digital economy.

The Company enables the digital transformation of enterprises globally, including 300 of the Fortune 500 —



unlocking opportunities for businesses by enabling borderless growth, boosting product innovation and customer experience, improving productivity and efficiency, building agility and managing risk.

CSR is not a 'budget' at Tata Communications - it is a value system that is intended to permeate through all that they do and believe in as an organization. Their network-associated services have operations in more than 200 countries and territories. At Tata Communications, it is believed that the spread of technology and digital connectivity are critical to accelerate human progress. Tata Communications is



committed to conducting its CSR activities in a manner that is rooted in ethics, promotes well-being, imparts resilience, and supports regeneration. Keeping the community at the centre of development while recognising its inter-connectedness with the natural environment, Tata Communications identifies Education,

Sustainable Livelihoods, Healthcare and Environment as priority areas for its CSR work. They have aligned their CSR initiatives with the UN SDGs, prioritising seven SDGs (SDGs 1,3,4,5,8,13 and 17) with the organization's vision and ambition which they promote through their social impact programmes.

Tata Communications is supporting the Tata Trusts Cancer Care Initiative through a grant that focuses on the capacity building of healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses and patient navigators for strengthening the cancer screening initiative of the Government of India. Quality improvement and Quality initiative exercises are being conducted to ensure uniform standards of cancer care in the critical areas of patient services in the outreach as well as



the project sites located in Assam, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. Tata Communications is supporting training programs that have been developed to train clinical teams on protocols and standard treatment guidelines developed by the National Cancer Grid (NCG) to ensure provision of the same quality of care to patients from any part of the country. Such trainings are conducted at Tata Memorial Hospital or any other apex partner institute. The partnership has also supported different workshops and trainings for improving cancer awareness like :

- Indian Collaborative Childhood Leukemia Study Group (ICICLE) Workshop and Symposium, 2016 organized by TMC, Kolkata;
- Annual Cancer Bio-Banking Workshop on the standards of procedures of bio-banking



throughout the country in 2017 at Tata Medical Centre (TMC), Kolkata;

- International Collaboration for Research Methods Development in Oncology (CReDO) workshops in 2017 and 2020, to train researchers in oncology and its research protocol development.

We are truly grateful to Tata Communications for their support towards the work that we are doing in cancer care and look forward to a long-lasting and equally beneficial partnership.



We also immensely value and appreciate all our donors whose support is crucial in our endeavour to reach out and make a difference in cancer care.

# Byline : The Importance of Palliative Care - Dr. Paul Sebastian Head - Community Outreach, Tata Trusts Cancer Care Initiative



Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families, who are facing problems associated with life-threatening illness. It prevents and relieves suffering through the early identification, correct assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, whether physical, psychosocial or spiritual.

Each year, an estimated 40 million people are in need of palliative care globally and 78% of them live in low and middle-income countries. Access to palliative care varies greatly throughout the world. The barriers to palliative care include lack of awareness among policy-makers, health professionals and the public, absence of national and state policies for palliative care, lack of trained palliative care health professionals and inadequate access to opioids due to restrictive regulations. Palliative care got its start as hospice care, often delivered by caregivers at religious institutions. Dame Cicely Saunders, a British physician, founded the first hospice in London in 1948 specifically to care for patients with terminal illnesses.

Palliative care began in India with the starting of cancer pain clinics attached to major cancer centres in Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Trivandrum, Bangalore and Delhi in the mid-to-late 1980s. The first hospice was started in Mumbai by Dr. Lucito De Souza, a cancer surgeon of Tata Memorial Hospital in 1986. From the 1990s onwards, there was a

significant increase in the momentum of development of hospice and palliative care services.

The Indian Association of Palliative Care (IAPC) is the national umbrella organization for palliative care in India. It has played a major role in improving the delivery of quality palliative care across the country, by creating awareness in the society, training of over 8000 professionals through the IAPC Certificate Course in Essentials of Palliative Care (CCEPC) and engaging in advocacy with Government and other agencies.

Due to the advocacy efforts of the IAPC and other organizations, the National Programme for Palliative Care (NPPC) was launched by the Government of India in 2012. In 2014, the severely restrictive Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS Act) was amended by the Indian Parliament, thus overcoming many of the legal barriers to opioid access.

At present, there are nearly 150 centres providing palliative care across the country. However most of these services are usually concentrated in large cities and regional cancer centers, with the exception of Kerala, where services are more widespread. A toll-free helpline 'SaathSaath' for people who need palliative care was launched on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021 as a result of the concentrated efforts of the IAPC and several other organizations. Callers seeking assistance can avail palliative services in languages like Hindi, English, Kannada, Malayalam, Telugu, Assamese and Marathi. One can reach the toll-free hotline number "18002027777" from Monday –Saturday from 10 am - 6 pm.

Having said the above, a lot more needs to be done especially for people in need, in the rural communities, since only 2% of India's population has access to palliative care.

Under the Cancer Care Initiative of the Tata Trusts, palliative care services have been initiated at the State Cancer Institute (SCI) in Guwahati, the Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH) in Dibrugarh, the Government Medical College Hospital (GMCH) in Tezpur and the Sri Venkateswara Institute of Cancer Care and Advanced Research (SVICCAR) in Tirupati. Palliative care services will be initiated in all our network hospitals when they become functional.

The Public Health Program of the Cancer Care Initiative has been supporting the National Health Missions (NHM) of the various States in the implementation of the



NPCDCS program of the Government of India. The main focus of the program is on creating awareness and building capacity of the frontline health workers.

There are manifold reasons why patients do not access palliative care services. But, it is likely that greater awareness of what palliative care is, and who can benefit from it, may lead to greater adoption of these services.