

Cancer Awareness: The Future Role of Indian System of Medicine in Cancer Care

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Cancer is an aggressive disease with low survival rate. Ironically treatment of cancer is a long and very costly due to high recurrence and mortality rate. Every year, 4th February is observed as world cancer day to raise awareness of cancer and to encourage its prevention, detection and prevention. It is organized by union for international cancer control (UICC). The emphasis is to overcome barrier to early diagnosis, treatment and palliative care. The cumulative effort is taken to improve cancer control and achieve global targets to reduce premature mortality from cancer and NCDs. Globally approximately 38 million people die of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) e.g. heart disease, cancer, and diabetes every year, with nearly 8 million of them dying from cancer. This number is expected to rise to 13 million by 2030 (<https://www.cancer.org/>). Therefore urgent action is needed to raise awareness about cancer, dispel myths and misconceptions, and develop practical strategies to address the disease.

Accurate early diagnosis and prognosis prediction of cancer are essential to enhance the patient's survival rate. In recent years the use of artificial intelligence (AI), especially machine learning and deep learning, has found popular applications in cancer prediction.

There are several lifestyle factors that influence the occurrence of cancer. These factors are obesity, diet, smoking, alcohol consumption that leads to different types of cancer such as breast cancer, prostate cancer, lung cancer and colon cancer etc. In addition India has an old tradition and culture, and a strong tradition of alternative systems of medicine that include Ayurveda, Naturopathy, Siddha, Yoga, Unani, Tibetan systems of medicine. There is an immense potential with healing power of herbal drugs which is prevalent from winning of noble prize in 2015 for Professor Youyou Tu for her key contributions to the discovery of artemisinin.

Artemisinin has saved millions of lives and represents one of the significant contributions of China to global health. So similarly rigorous research should be undertaken in Indian system of traditional medicine in the area of cancer prevention and treatment. In the area of cancer drug discovery 73% of molecules are either natural products or derived from natural products (<https://pubs.acs.org/>). Some of the well known anti-cancer drugs are camptothecin, taxol, vincristine, vinblastine, topotecan, irinotecan, docetaxal etc. are discovered from natural sources. So there is an urgent need to promote these indigenous forms of treatment and medicines, in similar route the Chinese have done, with proper trials. Further emphasis should be given on the safety and regulatory issues with valid regulatory mechanisms are needed. Medical Council of India should take steps 'to enhance the interface between Homoeopathy, Indian Systems of Medicine and modern systems of medicine'. Therefore there is a long way to go for the traditional medicine from Ayurveda for future endeavour.

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