

Preventive Oncology and Ayurveda

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Incidence of Cancer is fast rising. In India every year 10 Lacs of new patients are registered and it is estimated that by the year 2025 the number of Cancer patients will become five times more than today with enormous increase in the disease burden on the society. Hence the focus now should not be merely hospital care of existing patients rather the paradigm should shift more towards prevention of Cancer through appropriate socio-environmental strategies. Further the gloomy picture of cancer full of myths and misconceptions should be removed from the mind of the people. Cancer as known 40 years ago and that known today are very different. Now cancer is not a disease of unknown cause. 80-90 percent cancers are caused by environmental factors, life style errors and stress which are modifiable.

The following new information have to reach the masses that 1. Cancer is a preventable disease, 2. Cancer is a curable disease if diagnosed in time and treated well, 3. It is no more an incurable tragedy. Cancer as of today has a big Psycho element with anxiety, panic and depression both as its cause and its effect and this psycho element is largely responsible for progression of the disease and retards the healing process. Hence elimination of undue anxiety and stress is an essential step in prevention and treatment of cancer today. People have to understand and believe that cancer is just a disease like any other disease which needs prolong treatment and follow up. There is no need of panic, despair and hopelessness. A new discipline “**Psycho oncology**” is coming up with admirable activism to educate the cancer patients and their families. The

doctors, clinical psychologists and social scientists best know how to tackle the issue but often they are more academic and technical and their message does not reach the people. The best activist messengers i.e. propagators could be the patents themselves particularly those who have overcome the crisis and have been cured or well controlled after successful treatment. They should establish their own society/association to help the victims of cancer who are struggling with the disease. They should advice the fellow patients how to stop worrying and start living undergoing prescribed treatment, life style modifications and healthy food.

It cannot be overemphasized that Medical pluralism and pronature holistic approach to health care deserves to be promoted at all levels. But the medical profession as well as the people has to realize that Medical pluralism does not mean a hotchpotch approach of health care. It has to be rational, logical and should be guided with a scientific temper adopting a Symbio-health care approach beyond conflict and contradiction between the systems of medicine, traditional or contemporary. The patient’s life and health is supreme, not the systems of medicine. The systems of medicine are only the means to help the suffering humanity.

Ayurveda has strength in promotion of Health and prevention of diseases with the help of life style modification, healthy dietetics and nutrition besides its health promoting herbo-mineral cures. Ayurvedic *Swasthavritta* takes care of the seasonal bio-fluctuations and related metabolic stressors to conserve necessary homeostasis i.e. *Dhatusamya* and promote immunity in

the body affording positive health and prevent disease. Similarly Ayurvedic *Sadvritta* i.e. mental hygiene and psychosocial code of conduct affords positive and creative mindset and improved mental stamina which helps an individual to fight stress better and to prevent a disease. Cancer seems to be a disease with *Kapha* and *Vata Dosha* aggravation. Hence diet has to be suitably moderated. Excess fat and sugars are to be avoided and plenty of seasonal fruits and vegetables should be consumed. Regular exercise and practice of *Yoga* are the sheet anchors of healthy life style. Over and above is the care of clean pollution free environment with clean air and clean water besides clean food. Ayurveda emphasizes the role of *Desha* and *Kala* as well as *Ahara* and *Vihara* as the fundamental health recipes.

Ayurveda prescribes a large number of herbo-mineral medications for promotive, preventive and curative care. The safest and the most useful are the *Rasayana* herbs which are largely nutraceuticals and possess immune modulator and nutritive effect. Many Ayurvedic plant drugs have been scientifically reported to have specific cytostatic activity and are being studied for their role as green anticancer remedies. *Haridra*, *Bhallataka*, *Ark*, *Amalaki* are some of such prospective drugs. The Ayurvedic approach of health care promotes health, prevents diseases such as diabetes and cancer besides many others. These time-tested remedies also help the healing of cancer in diagnosed patients. These remedies could best be used as adjunct to the ongoing anticancer therapies prescribed by conventional oncologists with mutual cooperation. It is

believed that this complementary treatment will help to reduce the adverse effect of modern medications and will accelerate the healing process besides promoting the overall health of the patient.

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