

Cancer groups form apex body

8 Oct 2002, 2307 hrs IST, Radhika D Srivastava, TNN

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/24596749.cms>

NEW DELHI: Cancer support groups from all over the country, mainly run by survivors of the disease, have come together to form an apex body that will help patients emotionally, financially, medically and also with temporary shelter.

The apex body, Cancer Care India, has 19 members. Its general secretary P K Ghosh, a survivor himself, said: "All the groups earlier worked in their cities. As a result, a patient was virtually left with no support once he or she travelled out."

Ghosh said very often, a doctor in a small city would refer a patient to a specialised hospital in another city. And usually patients would have no clue on how to reach the hospital, who to see and where to stay. Poor patients also often have too little money to buy chemotherapy drugs.

With Cancer Care coming into place, a patient will know of one address where help would be available, he said.

Vandana Gupta who runs 'V' Care, a Mumbai-based NGO working as a support group for cancer patients, said: "Now, if a patient from Delhi comes to us, our volunteer can provide emotional help. We can arrange interactions with survivors and help from cancer specialists."

Gupta said depending on the financial status, the patient may also be helped with the purchase of drugs. Dr Rati Vajpeyi who runs a similar organisation in Kolkata called "Prerak" said she would be able to reach out to a patient in any part of West Bengal and even Bangladesh.

"We have a network of volunteers all over the state and once a patient gets in touch with us, we can direct him or her to the closest centre for help," she said.

Vajpeyi said: "We believe in imparting psychological care and are an information bank on the disease. Cancer specialists usually do not have time to explain the nitty-gritty of the disease, its treatment, side effects, costs etc, to the patient. This is where we fill the gap."

Ghosh said all Cancer Care members had been divided into north, west, east and south zones. He said the organisation, other than working for patients directly, would also be interacting with the government to bring about policy changes in favour of cancer patients.