

SCIENCE HAS MADE CHEMOTHERAPY AN EXTREMELY SAFE OPTION



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1. IS CANCER CURABLE ?

Yes, According to statistics, 60% to 70% of cancers can be permanently cured. If it is an early stage, upto 80% of cancers can be cured. While in certain diseases like blood cancer (leukemia), lymphoma and testicular cancer, up to 75% of patients in even advanced stages can be cured with chemotherapy.

2. WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF CANCER TREATMENTS AVAILABLE?

Mainly there are three types of cancer treatments available-surgery chemotherapy and radiation, In the past, surgery was the mainstay of cancer treatment while chemotherapy and radiation therapy was reserved only for incurable cases. However, in the last few decades, there has

been dramatic advances in understanding of the biology of cancer cells. It is now believed that even in early stage 2 and 3, micro metastasis i.e. microscopic cancer cells have already potentially spread to other parts of the body, making chemotherapy a must to care cancer and prevent recurrence. It is often used before surgery in diseases like breast cancer, ovarian cancer, colon and oral cancers to decrease the size of the tumour and make surgery less morbid and easier. While in other cancers like bone cancer and multiple myeloma, it is life saving.

3. IT IS BELIEVED THAT CHEMOTHERAPY HAS SEVERE SIDE EFFECTS?

Unfortunately, that is a myth. Tolerance to most chemotherapy has dramatically improved thanks to better and safer chemotherapy drugs, use of targeted therapy, which kills only cancer cells and does not damage healthy cells and also use of better supportive treatment, these advances in science has made chemotherapy an extremely safe and effective treatment option.

4. IS TRUE THAT CHEMOTHERAPY CAN ONLY BE GIVEN IN BIG HOSPITALS AND IS VERY EXPENSIVE?

Previously, chemotherapy was given only in big hospitals and was prohibitively expensive and out of the reach of the common man. However, thanks to intervention by our government, with the availability of generic drugs by Indian companies, which are equally effective and safe, the cost of chemotherapy has dramatically reduced.

Also, the current trend is most Western countries is administration of chemotherapy in daycare chemo centers. Which instead of a typically hospital like atmosphere, provide

lounge beds, music, highly skilled staff, friendly atmosphere with the latest gadgetry to prevent or treat any chemotherapy related side effect. Day care centers save time, are reasonably economical and save the patient and the relatives from the administrative hassles of a hospital admission. A dedicated day care centre has the advantages of allowing safe, easy drugs administration, respecting the patient's wish to avoid hospitalization and providing a familiar facility, which enhances the patient's physical comfort and psychological well-being.

The oncologist has direct and immediate control of drug administration, assistance if problems arise, care is less expensive than inpatient care and overnight stay can be avoided. It also facilitates monitoring and control of treatment to be administered at the patient's convenience.

5. CAN WE PREVENT CANCER ?

Leading a healthy lifestyle does have a beneficial role in preventing colon and breast cancer. Avoiding smoking dramatically reduces chance of lung and esophagus cancers. Avoiding chewing tobacco reduces likelihood of oral cancer by 90%. Vaccines against hepatitis B and HPV do have a role in preventing liver cancer and cervical cancer to an extent.

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