

A cancer spectre haunts Jammu and Kashmir. The disease which comes without warning consumed 7925 lives in the year 2016 across the state.



The disease has been on rise in last more than a decade.

In 2011, there were a total of 10688 cancer cases in Jammu and Kashmir and this number increased to 11052 in 2012 and 11428 in 2013. As far as mortality cancer cases are concerned, the number was 4703 in 2011 and the same increased to 4863 in 2012 and 5028 in 2013.

According to the data, the number of prostate cancer cases in Jammu and Kashmir during 2011 was 344 and the same increased to 366 in 2012 and 390 in 2013. The data further revealed that there were 144 deaths due to prostate cancer in Jammu and Kashmir during 2011 and the number surged to 154 in 2012 and 164 in 2013.

7144 people lost their lives to cancer in year 2014 in Jammu and Kashmir. This number increased incrementally in 2015 with 7525 people succumbing to this disease. And the last year 2016 saw 7925 people dying because of the fact that the disease could not be detected early.

Of these, 532 in 2014, 566 in 2015 and 604 in 2016 lost their lives to Breast cancer. Further, the number of females who lost their lives to cervix cancer in 2014 were 708. This number jumped to 719 in 2015 and stood at 731 in year 2016. More significant are the number of cancer cases reported in various hospitals across the state. 14115 cases were reported in the year 2014, 14864 cases in year 2015 and 15652 in the year 2016.

According to the data, the number of patients who lost battle against cancer during the last 3 years has remained around 50 percent. It has neither gone down nor has the number increased during the last 3 years.

Alarmingly, the number of breast as well as cervix cancer cases too has shown increase. At present, for the cancer screening, the patients are paying through their nose to get the same conducted outside the State and this is also contributing in late detection of the disease and subsequently leading to increase in mortality rate.

Head of the Radiotherapy Department in Government Medical College (GMC) Jammu Dr Asutosh Gupta disagreed with the number of cancer death data. "I don't agree that this data is correct since most of the cancer patients die at home. The data put out by the government of India is based on deaths in the hospitals. The data will shock you if the number of deaths which actually take place because of cancer are taken into account," said Dr Gupta. "The biggest problem behind the rising numbers is that most people in Jammu and Kashmir don't suspect they may have cancer." said

Gupta regretted that despite alarming increase in the number of the deaths due to cancer, PET Scan and Linear accelerator, the two machines which are a must have not been procured. He added that 70 to 80 percent patients can be cured if the disease is diagnosed at an early stage. "We usually get patients at the advanced stage and hence, 80 percent do not survive after this stage," said Dr Asutosh.

For anything that continues over three weeks-a lump, an episode of bleeding, an ulcer, a cough-one needs to check for cancer. But we continually come across patients who change doctors when asked to go for a screening or a biopsy, said Dr Gupta.

What makes this serious is the non-seriousness of the state government in taking effective measures for early detection and prevention of the larger populace from this deadly disease.

Cancer is a multifactorial disease, the risk factors of which, inter-alia, include ageing population, unhealthy life styles, use of tobacco products, unhealthy diet and air pollution.

(By : Syed Junaid Hashmi)