

The CPC Program of IAP and NCTB of IIT Madras

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As we all are hopeful for a vaccine or therapy for the coronavirus pandemic, such may not be the case for some of the other diseases that kill millions of people. Almost 10 million people die of cancer every year, and India alone accounts for about 1 million deaths. Unlike adult cancers, Pediatric cancers are treatable most of the time. However, up to 70% of children in India who succumb to the disease are not diagnosed early or treated appropriately.

World Health Organisation (WHO) has a tool on its website that predicts the future cancer incidence and mortality burden worldwide until 2040, and the figure is most disturbing, particularly in India, as we have much to do to not only effectively treat the disease but also to detect it early. Much needed solutions are missing in our system. If detected early and if the pediatrician has the advice of a Pediatric oncologist, the majority of pediatric cancers can be treated at the primary care location itself. This would not only enhance outcomes but also significantly reduce the load on our overburdened tertiary care system for cancer. It will eliminate the emotional and financial distress for thousands of families who endure the child's hospitalization.

Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP) has been pursuing various strategies to create a program that can empower all our pediatric clinics with tools and support to detect cancer early and to start appropriate therapy. I am glad to inform you that a promising solution has been initiated by IAP, which will go a long way towards creating a national solution for Pediatric cancer and help to save more lives than we currently do.

CATCH PEDIATRIC CANCER PROGRAM

The Catch Pediatric Cancer (CPC) Program of IAP and IIT Madras is a national program for early detection and treatment of cancer in children. CPC is an initiative of the IAP and Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM) and the National Cancer Tissue Biobank, a national facility financed by the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India.

We are working hard to launch the service in the second half of this year. The service will be available to the 130 million children who are treated annually by our member pediatricians. The CPC program will include simple detection guidelines for our doctors, tele-access to a pediatric oncologist, and locally available, comprehensive cancer diagnostics capabilities. The components of the program are:

- Training program for pediatricians on Pediatric Cancer Detection Guidelines for common cancers - delivered by IAP;
- Local sample collection and diagnostics service - delivered by IIT Madras; and
- Pediatric oncologists panel to give pediatricians pre-diagnostic counseling and post-detection therapy support, along with a legal and technology secured telemedicine and diagnostic support system - delivered by IAP.

CPC creates an inflow of tissue samples for the National Cancer Tissue Biobank, thus creating an Indian pediatric cancer genomic database. This will enable superior therapies in the future and enhance outcomes for South Asian children.

Cancer is a severe disease that requires immediate expert care. Recognizing the possible warning signs of cancer and taking quick action is the key to early diagnosis. Increased awareness of possible warning signs of cancer among doctors can have a significant impact on the disease. The CPC program is a commitment from IAP to lead and drive a movement for change.

As doctors, our *mantra* has always been "prevention is better than cure." But in the case of cancer, I would like to tweak the above mantra slightly, "Early detection is better than stage four." We aim to be the pioneers in the adoption and execution of such a program. We will do this at a national level by making it available to all our members at the earliest.

*Jai Hind!
Jai IAP!*