

Now a 'Hope Express' to rev up the Never Say Die Spirit



Mrs. Simone Tata launched Indian Cancer Society's Digital Mammography Van on Wheels at the PVM Gymkhana, Mumbai on 22nd October, 2010. This van is in memory of Parveen Aga, whose family and friends got together to finance this dream of ICS.

For nearly 60 years of its existence, Indian Cancer Society, India's first anti-cancer NGO, has been at the forefront of the fight against cancer. Armed with the belief and motto that 'Cancer when detected early, is curable' ICS launched India's first Mobile Cancer Detection Centre on March 27th, 1982, in Mumbai, amongst its varied activities to fight cancer.

As part of the Hope Campaign Initiative launched in February 2010, ICS announced the 'Hope Express' – a state-of-the-art Cancer Detection Van exclusively for Women, equipped with a Digital Mammography unit. The 'Hope Express' will be run by women for women in Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh with gynecologists and support personnel/infrastructure in-built. It starts its journey in Mumbai and will screen for the most commonly occurring cancers amongst women i.e. breast and cervical cancers, along with oral cancer.

Today, cancer in India is growing at an alarming rate and for women this increase is mainly due to the increase in breast and cervical cancer cases. Estimates of the Mumbai Cancer Registry for the year 2008 show that a little over 100,000 women will develop breast cancer, of which about 52,000 will die of this disease. The 5 year survival rate of breast cancer in India is 54%. About 142,000 women are likely to develop cervical cancer of which 79,000 will succumb to the disease. The 5 year survival rate for cervical cancer in India is 46%. In India, women remain ignored and are reluctant to openly discuss problems with family and friends. Dr. Arun Kurkure, Senior Surgical Oncologist at Breach Candy Hospital, Mumbai and Hon. Secretary & Managing Trustee of ICS says, "We want to spread more awareness of these cancers and on the crucial need for regular screening and early detection while making the tests more accessible to a largely underprivileged audience base."



From its launch in 1982, the ICS Mobile Cancer Detection Centre has screened nearly 160,000 people all over Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. In 2008-09, ICS organized 64 camps where 5796 men and women were screened for cancer. Out of these, 108 suspected cases were referred to organizations including Tata Memorial Hospital for further investigation and management. The same will be continued through the 'Hope Express' for thousands of women, who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to be screened for breast and cervical cancer. These camps will also be undertaken free of cost for underprivileged women.

Breakthroughs in medical science and technology, awareness of the contributing factors to the disease and a healthy diet and lifestyle have all helped in controlling cancer. But the key is regular screening and early detection. Over here we can also include a quote from a cancer survivor.

The 'Hope Express' has come to fruition through the single minded efforts of Mr. Alan Rosling, ex- Director, Tata Sons and the generous contributions of more than Rs. 1 crore from members of the British Business Group, India and well wishers in memory of Mrs. Parveen Aga.

ICS will charge Rs. 500/- per woman for its mobile cancer detection screening including Mammography and Pap smear which otherwise would cost more than Rs. 3000/- at any other healthcare centre.

Deserving cases will be screened free of cost. Suspicious or positive cases will be referred to the Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai or to a local cancer hospital if the patient is reluctant to travel to Mumbai.

ACTIVITIES OF THE INDIAN CANCER SOCIETY

The Indian Cancer Society (ICS) is India's oldest NGO and National Anti Cancer Association dedicated to the fight against cancer through its numerous activities.

For nearly 60 years ICS has been in the forefront of rehabilitation and welfare activities of the poorest of the poor suffering from cancer, by providing them with emotional, physical and financial support.

ICS presently has an annual expense budget of approx Rs. 4 crores of which roughly Rs. 2 crores is the gap that needs to be funded through donations. The various activities that are carried out by ICS are:

- * Rehabilitation of underprivileged cancer survivors by providing them vocational training and jobs at the ICS Rehab Centre at Parel, close to Tata Memorial Hospital, thereby enabling them to earn a small living whilst undergoing treatment. All the patients at the Rehab Centre are given a wholesome meal everyday and are given monthly rations and nutritive supplements to help them cope with ongoing treatment.

- * ICS strongly believes "Cancer is treatable, when detected early". Hence, in the fight against cancer, ICS is in the forefront with its prevention and awareness programs and its mobile detection camps which go within and out of Maharashtra and encourages the public to avail of affordable cancer detection screening.

- * Maintenance of the ICS Cancer Registry which is the oldest population based registry in India and is part of the National Cancer Registry Program and recognised as a Research Institution by the Govt. of India. The data accumulated by the ICS Cancer Registry is accepted by the World Health Organisation.

- * Dwelling units for 30 child cancer patients along with their parents, completely free of cost, at the Rehab Centre at Parel, Mumbai.