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Colorectal cancer is curable if people are careful

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Dr Ravi Gaur, Oncquest laboratories talks about Colorectal cancer



When the growth of polyps in the inner lining of the large intestine becomes abnormally high, it leads to the formation of cancer in the colon or rectum. Though the rate of colorectal cancer in India is relatively lower than in other countries, a significant section of the population is vulnerable to this disease due to a variety of untoward changes in people's lifestyle.

Common symptoms

The frequent and uncontrollable urge of bowel movement, blood and pain, while passing the stool, recurrent diarrhoea, constipation for a prolonged period, and unexplained weight loss are some of the early signs of colorectal cancer. Thankfully, cancer care and treatment for colorectal cancer are now available in the country, but a lack of awareness among the population is a big challenge that India is facing. Ignorance is never bliss and too much inclination towards unhealthy food habits and lifestyle leads to lifetime risks of colorectal cancer in both men and women. If colorectal polyps are removed before they develop into cancerous tumours, the chances of curing the cancer increase to the manifold.

As most of the symptoms are common in case of piles and chronic diarrhoea, self-diagnosis and self-treatment from homemade medicines or contacting pseudo doctors can only aggravate the problem. One of the researches done BMJ also confirms that self-diagnosis and inappropriate treatment can be more challenging than the disease itself. After experiencing any of the health complication mentioned above, one should always go for screening in a reputed laboratory or diagnostic centre. And, once the report shows a positive case, the patient must seek the help of a qualified and experienced oncologist. There is no need to be panic as there are a number of specialised hospitals all over the country. Hence, for a painless and fearless life, timely screening and detection is a must.

Apparent causes

Studies are going on for decades; still, medical science has not reached any concrete conclusion that what is the exact cause for colorectal cancer in human beings. The majority of the doctors all over the world believe that it happens when healthy cells in the colon experience some changes (mutations) in their DNA. In a healthy person, cells grow and divide at a definite pace and in a subsequent order to ensure the proper functioning of all the organs in the human body. The problem arises when a cell's DNA got damaged by mutation and cells continue to divide, and this result in the formation and growth of a tumour. Experts also claim that rapid urbanisation and sedentary lifestyle are primarily responsible for the unwanted mutations in genes in human DNA.

Risk factors

According to GLOBOCAN data, in 2018, deaths resulted from cancer were 7, 84,821 while 22, 58,208 were struggling bravely with this fatal disease. Hardly 20 per cent people are aware of the truth that severe and chronic constipation, which people tend to treat by self, can trigger colorectal and gastrointestinal cancer. Also, it cannot be ignored that 22 per cent of adults in India are suffering from acute constipation. At the stage one of any cancer, the patient does not even realise any noticeable change in his/her body, but they only come to know after entering into stage four of the cancer when the body becomes quite unresponsive to the medications and treatments.

Types of treatments

Early diagnosis is always considered a breakthrough in the treatment of any sort of cancer, including the colorectal cancer. In comparison to other digestive cancers like gastric or pancreatic, the chances of recovery are always better in colorectal cancer if diagnosed and treated timely. Colonoscopy, imaging scans, barium enema X-ray, and flexible sigmoidoscopy are the proven ways of detecting colorectal cancer, and as far as its treatment is concerned it depends on the level or stage of the cancer. After making the right diagnosis an oncologist may have various treatment options such as chemotherapy, immunotherapy, radiation therapy, drug treatments, and surgical removal of the tumour. Only a qualified oncologist knows that which therapy will be more effective and cause least side effects after recovery.

Apart from this, it must be kept in mind that in many cases one or two screening is not enough. Many times, in diseases like cancer, the true report comes after three or four screenings and primary care consultations. Hereby, the importance of preventive health care is very much imperative to deal with colorectal cancer and required sufficient health checkups and screenings at regular intervals. Remember, cancer is curable but people should fight with it scientifically, i.e., through advanced diagnostics, proper treatment, and complete awareness.