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Proton therapy cancer cure now in India: Philips Healthcare & IBA ink deal

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With an aim to provide enhanced access to proton therapy for cancer treatment in India, the Royal Philips, a leader in image-guided therapies and IBA (Ion Beam Applications S.A., EURONEXT), world's leading provider of proton therapy solutions on June 12, 2015, announced the signing of an exclusive agreement.Â

The alliance combines Philips' expertise in clinical informatics and innovative imaging techniques for therapy planning and guidance and IBA's strengths in proton therapy.Â

As per Mr Sameer Garde, president, Philips Healthcare, "We are very pleased to announce that Philips India and IBA are introducing the best-in-class proton beam therapy for cancer patients in India. We are confident that the future launch of the first proton therapy center in Apollo Hospitals, Chennai, will mark the beginning of a new phase in cancer treatment in the country and also the subcontinent".

When asked by the BioSpectrum, Mr Garde revealed that the cost of the therapy would remain between Rs 20-22 lakh per patient to treat the primary cnacers (stationary tumors in first stage). "The cost of establishing the proton therapy centre is close to Rs 500 crore in India," he added.Â

Leveraging high quality imaging and proton therapy offers the potential to increase confidence in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer, reduce short- and long-term side-effects and potentially enhance the quality of life of the patient before, during and after treatment. Advanced MRI, PET and CT imaging technologies will help physicians better target proton beam delivery to destroy cancer cells whilst avoiding healthy tissue. This agreement builds upon the collaboration between Philips India and IBA, which started in 2013, to build the Apollo Proton Therapy Center, the first proton therapy center in India.

"We are privileged that Philips India is supporting us in bringing cutting edge proton beam therapy to India. We are certain that this initiative will be a significant step in improving the quality of cancer treatment in the country," said Mr Olivier Legrain, chief executive officer (CEO), IBA, adding, "With this collaboration, IBA further strengthens its world leading position in proton therapy and stays at the forefront of delivering the latest in innovative cancer therapy to the Asia region. Globally, IBA has now sold 33 proton therapy centers, more than all other providers combined."

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Proton therapy is an important addition to cancer treatment in India given that the incidence of cancer is 70-90 per 100,000 people with children comprising nearly 5 per cent of these patients. Proton therapy is considered to be one of the most advanced treatments available in the fight against cancer. With the precision that proton therapy offers, it is possible to target the tumor more effectively while limiting the side effects of the treatment. Protons deposit the majority of their energy within a precisely controlled zone, directly in the tumor while limiting the impact on healthy tissues surrounding the tumor.

Proton therapy is particularly appropriate for the treatment of eye and brain cancers, tumors close to the brain stem and spinal cord as well as prostate, liver, lung cancers. Proton therapy is also extremely well-suited for the treatment of pediatric cancers.

The exclusive Philips-IBA agreement for India follows the framework agreement that Philips and IBA signed in September of last year. The framework agreement comprises research and development, marketing and sales of imaging and therapy solutions in oncology. The collaboration also enables both organizations to mutually leverage technologies and solutions: IBA benefits from Philips diagnostic imaging products offered to oncology care centers, while Philips will leverage IBA proton therapy solutions within its offering for customers in select markets around the world. As part of the framework agreement, Philips and IBA have already signed multiple country-specific collaboration agreements, each optimized for the local market needs.