

INTERVIEW

'We are currently focussing on oncology care'

Dr Rakesh Kumar Vyas, Medical Director, Radiation Oncology, Balco Medical Centre speaks to **Prathiba Raju** about how Balco Medical Centre (BMC) a specialised cancer hospital is serving people of central India by offering a holistic treatment for cancer patients



How important is Balco Medical Centre (BMC) and how is it serving the people of central India as it is the only integrated oncology facility?

Worldwide, India ranks among the top three countries in terms of cancer incidences and mortality. For the year 2018, India has reported that 1,157,294 new cancer cases were detected and there were 784,821 mortalities attributed to this dreaded disease. It is

class, affordable cancer treatment.

Till now how many patients have benefited from this 170 bedded hospital, particularly the footfall of people from remote areas like Korba (Chhattisgarh) and Jharsuguda (Odisha)?

In one year since inauguration, the hospital has seen a total footfall of 3,092 patients of which 90 per cent are from the state of Chhattisgarh. Most of these patients are

With BMC located closer home to the tribals of Chhattisgarh and Western Odisha, cancer patients of these regions can now easily avail modern cancer treatment at their doorstep.

You had mentioned over 250 cancer surgeries and 100 other surgeries in four months of operation. Can you elaborate on these?

BMC commenced surgeries from June 2018 and has, so far,

Item	Unit	USA	India	Chhattisgarh
Linear Accelerators		11.8	0.3	0.18
Medical Oncologists	Per million population	33	0.9	0.14
Radiation Oncologists		20	1.5	0.21

estimated that cancer incidence is increasing at a CAGR of about 3 per cent and the trend is likely to continue in the future.

In India, in comparison to developed countries, there is low penetration of infrastructure and shortage of oncologists. Even within India, the availability of resources in Chhattisgarh is lower and majority of oncology facilities are located in Tier- I cities.

It is therefore evident that there is a significant shortage of proper medical care for cancer and thus, the importance of establishing a 170-bed cancer tertiary care hospital at Naya Raipur, Chhattisgarh cannot be overstressed. This cancer centre, equipped with state-of-the-art diagnostics and modern clinical labs, since its inauguration in March 2018, is in the forefront of providing world

predominantly from Raipur and its surrounding districts. The state wise break-up is as follows:

- i. Chhattisgarh : 2851
- ii. Odisha : 113
- iii. MP : 40
- iv. Rest of India : 88

Completing a year, what is the disease pattern you have tracked in the patients, particularly in cancer care? How is the centre beneficial to tribal belt of Chhattisgarh and Odisha?

One year of BMC's operations have revealed that amongst women breast, cervix and ovarian cancer are most prevalent and amongst men, it is lip, oral cavity and lung.

Cancer treatment is protracted in nature. Earlier, many patients were forced to travel far and undergo the agony of staying away from home for extended periods.

conducted 344 surgeries with 310 surgeries related to cancer and 34 non-cancer ones. The bulk of surgeries is in three areas: head and neck, breast and abdominal cancers. For cancer surgeries, an integral part of the procedure is reconstructing the defect and we have used tissue from all parts of the body to reconstruct these defects. We frequently use Free Tissue Transfer, which is an advanced reconstruction technique that allows for precise reconstruction for better cosmetic and functional outcomes.

Breast services treat breast cancer with or without preserving the breast with immediate plastic reconstruction if desired by the patient. We have also pioneered sentinel node biopsy in the region which helps improve the quality of life of breast cancer patients.



BMC's motto is providing cancer treatment with 'Compassion, Care & Cure.' It is estimated that for a comparable cancer treatment in BMC and a similar tertiary cancer centre, the cost at BMC would be less by 20 to 30 per cent



Abdominal surgeries include surgery for digestive track as well as gynecological cancers. We employ laparoscopic minimally invasive techniques in as many patients as possible. This leads to a better recovery and outcome for patients and allows faster start of other treatment, like chemotherapy, when required.

Treatment for cancer is highly expensive. How cost-effective is BMC for patients?

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In addition, from the very inception of Ayushman Bharat, GoI's flagship health scheme, BMC has enlisted itself and is providing cashless treatment to the underprivi-

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leged sections of the society, even when the rates under the scheme are not financially viable.

Apart from specialised cancer care, will BMC introduce any other specialties in the upcoming years?

There is a demand from the surrounding communities to convert BMC into a multi-specialty hospital and with minimum effort many specialties can be introduced. However BMC is currently focussing on

oncology care and in the future after consolidation may open other specialties.

What are the latest technologies used in BMC and how is digitisation helping the patients?

The hospital has many engineering features such as pneumatic chutes for transport of patient samples, Integrated Building Management System that includes latest fire detection, alarm and firefighting systems, access con-

trols, surveillance systems and centralised monitoring of electrical and air-conditioning systems. In line with Vedanta Group's motto of Zero Harm, the hospital is environmentally friendly and is the only LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified Gold rated hospital in Chhattisgarh.

Considering the importance of viewing cancer patient's information across time, all information of a patient, including his radiology

and lab data is stored electronically and is available to the doctors seamlessly. This also enables the doctors to plan, superimpose and use the diagnostic information generated in one machine in another machine.

Located in Central India, do you think telemedicine will be useful? Does BMC conduct telemedicine consultations? If not now, will you be starting it in the future?

Currently, BMC is not conducting telemedicine. With the availability of latest teleconferencing equipment, provision of cameras in operation theaters, etc. telemedicine is an option BMC is exploring.

Presently BMC is regularly conducting cancer awareness and screening camps and monthly OPD's in Dhamatari and Ambikapur. BMC recognises the importance of early cancer detection and spreading cancer awareness.

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