

iGEM IIT Roorkee 2022

Patient Interview

“Only the Wearer shall know where the Shoe pinches..Only the Survivor knows the horrors of Horrendous Wars”

Guilty of taking away millions of innocent lives globally, The Reaper of Death, i.e. Cervical Cancer is one of the deadliest enemies that could grip naive bodies in our lifetime, with a very few people able to escape its tenacious hold and vicious effect. It takes immense courage and determination to survive this enemy. To understand the hidden intricacies of Cervical Cancer and its life-changing effect, We held an interview with a brave soul, whose will to live far supersedes the heinousness of Cervical Cancer, a Cervical Cancer Patient.

Q1. Can you please tell us about the first symptoms that led you to the hospital to consult a doctor?

A. It has become a common norm in India for Mothers and Homemakers to neglect their health and prioritize everyone but themselves. I am no different. But, Selflessness can sometimes lead to tragic situations. At that time, My first symptom was Irregular Periods. I experienced unusually heavy bleeding but I put my thoughts to rest thinking it was a chance occurrence, a one or two time thing hence I ignored it. I also ended up turning a blind eye towards the unusual discharge as my mind concluded it to be the result of the impending menopause. Some time later, I also began experiencing heavy abdominal pain, akin to the time I had my delivery. But, none of these symptoms prompted me to consult a doctor. Only after I casually mentioned all this to one of my relatives, she strongly recommended going for a check up. So, that was the first time I went to see a doctor, but I did not expect any major problems.

Q2. Which was the first test performed and what did the results show?

A. So, The First test performed was an Ultrasound followed by a D&C test (Dilation & Curettage). After 14 days, I received my test reports. Since I didn't suspect it to be Cancer, I went alone to get the reports. But, The doctor broke the news to me that it was stage 2 Cervical Cancer.

Q3. What do you feel about the treatment procedure, did you face any difficulties?

A. I underwent a massive change in my life as I shifted to Delhi for my treatment, painfully away from my family. Fortunately, My mother was with me throughout the procedure. The Doctor said that initially, they will be performing hysterectomy with the following steps being Chemotherapy and EBT. The complete treatment went quite smoothly, albeit it was mentally taxing, full of highs and lows. To pass up my time, I used to watch loads of movies in the hospital. I had frequent mood swings and had increased dependency on everyone else for going through with my day to day activities. Despite the grave situation I was in, I always knew in my heart that "This shall also pass, As all things do."

Q4. How were the hospital facilities? (Like the staff was supportive, did hospitals have proper protocols for patient care, so on and so forth.)

A. The Hospital Staff were extremely supportive throughout my treatment. Due to the type of Medication I was taking, It made me prone to a range of mood swings like I mentioned before, because of which there were instances where I would get annoyed at the Nurse or the Doctor. But, They showed immense understanding and were

empathetic towards my condition. I gained immense respect for all the staff at the hospital for displaying proper care towards the patients undergoing treatments which can be both physically and mentally taxing and challenging.

Q5. Being diagnosed with cervical cancer would mean that your family must've gone through an emotional rollercoaster themselves. Would you like to tell us something about that?

A. Well before being diagnosed with Cervical Cancer, I used to manage my house, take care of my family and follow through my profession simultaneously like every other woman in India. I was very deeply involved in my daughter's education. I taught her a few of her subjects. After being diagnosed, My Life took a massive turn as I was away from my home, I couldn't take care of my daughter's education nor my family. None of that was possible. My family has been incredibly strong and resilient throughout my treatment. They used to visit me in the hospital and we would watch movies together frequently. My family was highly distressed as any other cancer patient's family would but we came out strongly from this challenging ordeal.

Q6. What was your life like before and after the treatment?

A. I have always been an independent person. If I want to run an errand or complete any task, I prefer to accomplish it myself instead of relying on others for the same. During my time in the hospital, I really missed these things. I missed the freedom to do everything the way I wanted to. The feeling of incompetency would creep in occasionally on some days where I felt like a wounded bird trapped in her cage. But, even during those difficult moments, I never lost hope, I was very cheerful and incredibly optimistic about the future. I feel sometimes Cancer has given me re-birth, a re-incarnation, a second chance at living. I am filled with zeal and enthusiasm towards life. I have started learning so many new things. I finally learned to use the computer(didn't know it before), using zoom and started

undertaking online courses about the things I was highly curious about and wanted to learn. Now, I have become the kind of person who'd be the first one to get up and start dancing, and will make everyone else dance too, even the most stubborn ones. I also started reciting poetry, something I've always been good at but was scared of reciting it publicly after having shed the skin of introvertism.

Q7. Have you been involved with Cancer NGOs? Can you share more about it?

A. My doctor introduced me to several cancer NGO's and I have been actively associated with them now. Everyone who is associated with the Cancer survivors are a part of these Cancer Care Centers. We often overlook the mental states of the hospital staff like nurses who take care of the patients on a daily basis. These people undergo an equally emotionally distressing experience as the patient. These centers recognize this and organize special sessions for these people too. It feels amazing to be part of this space where I can converse with other cancer survivors and share my own journey with them. Even though something as tragic and distressing as Cancer brought us together, Yet It feels like we are all like a family.

