



Pfizer launches Project Aastha Cancer-Care Services and Helpdesk at The Gujarat Cancer & Research Institute, Ahmedabad

- Cabinet Minister Shri Pradip Parmar inaugurated the Helpdesk to aid cancer patients during diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation
- Expected to benefit over 20,000 cancer patients and families each year

Ahmedabad, March 30, 2022: Pfizer Limited launched the **Project Aastha helpdesk** at the Gujarat Cancer Research Institute (GCRI) on March 26, 2022. The helpdesk was inaugurated by Cabinet Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, **Shri Pradeep Parmar**. Project Aastha is an ongoing programme by Pfizer and Doctors for You to set up Cancer-Care support services in 10 cancer hospitals in 8 states across India. GCRI is now the **7th hospital** in the country to have this service. It is one of the largest cancer hospitals in the region that caters to patients from underprivileged backgrounds and those from remote rural areas in the state. The hospital provides free cancer treatment services to all patients.

Speaking at the launch, **Cabinet Minister Shri. Pradeep Parmar** said, *“Over the past few years, GCRI has played a vital role in delivering high-quality care to patients with cancer. The launch of Project Aastha at GCRI will support patients at the time of diagnosis, and during their treatment and rehabilitation after treatment. I congratulate the partners who have brought Project Aastha to Ahmedabad, and I look forward to the support that this will provide to patients across Gujarat.”*

The objectives of Project Aastha are to improve cancer care during treatment; link patients with various government schemes; provide guidance; establish linkages for patients to opt for financial support through trust, civil society, or individual donors; and establish a helpdesk at the cancer hospitals.

Commenting on the program, **Mr. S. Sridhar, Managing Director, Pfizer Limited** said, *“Cancer places a tremendous burden on the patient and their family, and every patient’s cancer journey is different. We are committed to bringing in ‘breakthroughs that change patients’ lives’ and we know that breakthroughs must go beyond medicines. The Aastha Helpdesks will support patients with cancer and their families in many ways, which would include access to available funding for treatment, access to accommodation for families, counselling support, and overall navigation in the hospital. Project Aastha has already been implemented in 6 other hospitals and we have seen the difference that it has made to patients in those cities. We are certain we will see the same impact here.”*

The helpdesk, set up in the Registration area of the hospital, will support patients with registration, travel booking information and support, local accommodation guidance and linkages, dietary advice between and after chemotherapy, emotional and mental health counselling over a helpline or in person, inter and intrahospital shifting and wheelchair management, referral of cancer patients to other field specialists for non-cancer-related medical issues, and follow-ups with registered patients.

Dr. Priti R Sanghvi, Deputy Director Gujarat Cancer and Research Institute said, *“I am sure that the launch of Project Aastha’s Cancer-Care Services and Helpdesk will be beneficial for the patients and their families. Project Aastha has played a vital role in improving the lives of patients. Patients will receive help all through their treatment journey including help with filling forms, registration, doctor consultation, economic aid through Governmental Schemes, and counselling support. I would like to congratulate the Project Aastha team and I hope that GCRI and Project Aastha together will fight cancer and help patients in need.”*

Commenting on the program, **Mr. Shaandeepan Ganapathy, Director, Doctors for You** said, *“For patients with cancer, screening and diagnosis are only the beginning of a long process during which they need help and support at several levels. This is particularly true for those who are underprivileged.”*



Here is where Project Aastha comes in. It also enables us to provide support and cancer care services to patients from tribal and hard to access areas in the state."

Since its launch in late 2021, Project Aastha has assisted over 6,00,000 patients in 6 hospitals around the country: Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai; B. Baruah Hospital, Guwahati; Homi Bhabha Hospital, Varanasi; Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Patna; Regional Cancer Center (RCC), Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Medical College, Raipur; and The Gujarat Cancer & Research Institute, Ahmedabad.

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