



Pfizer launches Project Aastha Cancer-Care Services and Helpdesk at the Regional Cancer Center in Raipur

- **Hon. Health Minister of Chhattisgarh, Shri T. Singh Deo inaugurates Project Aastha Helpdesk to aid cancer patients during diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation**
- **Expected to benefit over 20,000 cancer patients and families each year**

Raipur, March 7, 2022: Pfizer has launched the **Project Aastha helpdesk** at the Regional Cancer Center (RCC), Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Medical College, Raipur. The helpdesk was inaugurated by the Hon. Health Minister of Chhattisgarh, Shri T. Singh Deo, under the Project Aastha, which is part of an ongoing partnership between Pfizer and Doctors For You to set up Cancer-Care support services in 10 cancer hospitals in 8 states across India. RCC is now the **sixth hospital** in the country to have this service.

Speaking at the launch, **Hon. Health Minister of Chhattisgarh, Shri T. Singh Deo**, said, *“Over the last 5 years, the burden of cancer has been growing in our state and it is a matter of great concern for all of us. We welcome Project Aastha to Chhattisgarh and thank the partners for giving us the critical support we need to manage cancer in our state.”*

RCC is one of the largest cancer hospitals in the region that caters to patients from underprivileged backgrounds and those from remote tribal areas in Odisha and Chhattisgarh. The hospital provides free cancer treatment services to all patients.

Dr. Vivek Chaudhary, Regional Cancer Center (RCC), Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Medical College, said, *“The arrival of Project Aastha at our hospital will help us make sure that our patients get the support that they need during cancer treatment and subsequent follow-ups. This is of particular importance to our patients who are socioeconomically more vulnerable and those who do not have a personal support structure. We believe that this program will make a big difference in the lives of both patients and their families in the states of Odisha and Chhattisgarh.”*

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 cancer patients and their families in several important aspects, including access to available funding for treatment, access to accommodation for families, counselling support, and overall navigation in the hospital. We have already seen the difference that this project has made in the lives of patients in other cities, and we are convinced that it will do the same here.”*

The helpdesk, set up in the R Block of the hospital, will support patients with registration; travel booking information and support; local accommodation guidance and linkages; dietary counselling between and after chemotherapy, emotional and mental health counselling over a helpline or in person; counselling and referrals in case patients have comorbid conditions; 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.

Commenting on the program, **Dr. Rajat Jain, President, Doctors for You**, said, *“While screening and diagnosis are the first steps to help identify patients who have cancer, much needs to be done to ensure that these patients get the treatment and aftercare that they need. This is where Project Aastha comes*



in. It will also enable us to extend our support to remote and tribal areas where we already offer some cancer services.”

Since its launch in late 2021, Project Aastha has assisted over 6,00,000 patients in 5 hospitals around the country: Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai; B. Baruah Hospital, Guwahati; Homi Bhabha Hospital, Varanasi; Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Patna; and The Gujarat Cancer & Research Institute, Ahmedabad. The objectives of Project Aastha are to: improve cancer patient care during treatment, link patients with various government schemes, provide guidance, and establish linkages for patients to opt for financial support through trust, civil society, or individual donors, and establish a helpdesk at cancer hospitals.

In addition to the Hon. Health Minister, the launch event was also attended by Dr. Vivek Chaudhary, Director, Regional Cancer Center, Pt. JNMMC; and Dr. Pradeep Chandrakar and Dr. Manjula Beck, who are both Senior Consultants at the medical college.

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