

Health Connect

February 2015

Editorial

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Feb issue of Health Connect! To raise awareness of Cancer and to encourage its prevention, detection and treatment, World Cancer Day is marked on February 4, every year. In commemoration of the same, we at Good Health TPA dedicate this issue to support the goals of the World Cancer Declaration - primarily to reduce illness and death caused by Cancer.

This issue focuses on Cervical cancer which is a leading cause of cancer deaths among women in India. The USA and UK have managed to virtually eradicate cervical cancer through their screening and inoculation programs. It is time India adapts the same and put a strong emphasis on prevention, screening and early detection of cervical cancer.

Daadi Maa Kee Potli provides home remedies to handle Urinary tract infections.

In the Interview section, we have Dr. Y K Swapna (DNB, DGO, FICOG) of Swapna Health Care sharing with our readers her thoughts on Poly Cystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) in women and the measures to be adopted to prevent and handle it.

We hope you continue to find the newsletter interesting and informative. Do write in with your comments and feedback. We would love to hear from you!

**RKT Krishnan**

Editor, Health Connect and
CEO, Good Health TPA Services Ltd.

Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among Indian women between 15 and 44 years of age. India represents 26.4 percent of all women dying of cervical cancer globally with approximately 1.32 lakh new cases of cervical cancer being diagnosed annually.

What is Cervical Cancer?

It is Cancer that forms in tissues of the cervix (mouth of uterus or womb) when abnormal cells on the cervix grow out of control. It is almost always caused by a virus called human papillomavirus, or HPV.

Most Common Types of cervical Cancer

Squamous cell: 80% cervical cancers are diagnosed as squamous cell. They are composed of the flat cells that cover the surface of the cervix.

Adenocarcinoma: More than 10% cervical cancers are diagnosed as adenocarcinoma. This develops in the glandular cells which line the cervical canal. This type of cancer can be more difficult to detect with cervical screening tests because it develops within the cervical canal.

Adenosquamous cancers: They are tumours that contain both squamous and glandular cancer cells.

Others: Other rare types of cervical cancer can include clear cell, small cell undifferentiated, lymphomas and sarcomas

Causes

- Infection with HPV virus
- Weak Immune System
- Family History
- Giving birth at a young age
- Smoking
- Long term use of oral contraceptive pills
- Exposure to a chemical called tetrachloroethylene (generally used during dry cleaning or metal de-greasing)
- Chlamydia infection
- Being obese / overweight

In this issue

- Cervical Cancer
- Daadi Maa Kee Potli – Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)
- Interview – Dr YK Swapna, Swapna Health Care

Daadi Maa Kee Potli (from the Grandmother's closet)



Home Remedies for Urinary Tract Infection

Urinary Tract infection (UTI) is a very common health problem. While both men and women get UTIs, women are generally more prone to them. Here are some home remedies for quick relief:

Water: Drink plenty of water (> 8 glasses), as it will flush out the harmful toxins and bacteria from the body resulting in fast removal of the infection.

Barley Water: Add a spoon of barley seeds to about 3 litres of water. Boil this for 30 minutes till it turns pinkish. Cool to room temperature and sieve out the water. Add juice of one lemon, a little sugar and salt to the water. Pour this mixture into bottles and drink this water every 15-20 minutes



Spinach & Carrot Soup: Chop a handful of spinach leaves. Take 1 bowl of sliced carrots. Add both to about ½ litre of water. Boil for 15-20 min. Strain the water and crush the vegetables. Extract juice of vegetables to make soup. Add salt and pepper to taste. Drink the soup twice a day.

Amla & Turmeric: Add one teaspoon of amla & turmeric powder to a cup of water. Boil the solution until it becomes half. Drink this 3 times a day for 3-5 days.

Vitamin C: Add more vitamin C rich foods like amla, lemon and oranges to the diet as it creates an acidic environment in the bladder & urinary tract, which doesn't allow potentially-harmful bacteria to enter.



Blueberries & Cranberries: Consume as juice/smoothie. It helps reduce bacterial growth .

Pineapples: Rich with the enzyme bromelain, they are an effective natural treatment.

Flower stems & Petals: Decoction of boiled lotus petals/pink rose petals/chameli plant, consumed one ounce 3 times daily is a good cure.

Rice Starch: Mix 1 teaspoon sugar to ½ glass of rice starch & drink. It can be given to children also.

Cardamom: Drink Green cardamom powder with milk. It proves helpful.

Coriander Powder: Add 2 tsp coriander powder to 1 cup of hot water. Mix well & drink twice a day.

Onion: Chop 50 grams onion finely and boil it with 500 ml. water till the water is reduced to half. Strain the water and drink it in small doses.

Aromatherapy: Oils namely, sandalwood oil, tea tree oil, bergamot oil, frankincense and juniper oil are mixed together & rubbed on the area near the bladder. Continue for 3-4 days until symptoms sober down.

Take care and stay healthy!

Symptoms

Cervical cancer often has no symptoms in its early stages. Some symptoms later on include:

- Abnormal & irregular vaginal bleeding (after menopause, between periods, etc.)
- Vaginal discharge with an unpleasant odour / tinged with blood
- Pain in the lower belly or pelvis
- Pain during sex
- Problems urinating /defecating
- Swelling of the legs

Diagnosis

- **Physical exam and history:** This is conducted to check unusual signs such as lumps. A history of the patient's health and past illnesses and treatments will also be taken.
- **Pelvic exam:** An examination of the vagina, cervix, uterus, fallopian tubes, ovaries and rectum through a speculum.
- **Papsmear test:** A procedure in which cells are scraped from the cervix and looked at under a microscope to find out any abnormality.
- **Human papillomavirus (HPV) test:** A laboratory test used to check DNA or RNA for certain types of HPV infection. This test may be done using the sample of cells removed during a Pap test.
- **Colposcopy:** A procedure in which a colposcope¹ is used to check the vagina and cervix for abnormal areas. It gives the doctor a magnified view of the tissues of the vagina and the cervix.
- **Biopsy:** If abnormal cells are found in a Pap test, the doctor may suggest a biopsy. A biopsy is removal of a small amount of tissue from the cervix for examination under a microscope. Other tests can suggest that cancer is present, but only a biopsy can make a definite diagnosis.

If the biopsy indicates that cervical cancer is present, the doctor will refer the patient to a specialist, who may suggest additional tests to see if the cancer has spread beyond the cervix. These tests may include: X-ray, Computed tomography (CT or CAT) scan, Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), Positron emission tomography (PET) scan, Cystoscopy², Proctoscopy³, Laparoscopy⁴.

Staging

Staging is a way of describing where the cancer is located, if or where it has spread and whether it is affecting other parts of the body. There are different stage descriptions

¹ The colposcope is an instrument that has magnifying lenses (like binoculars)

² allows the doctor to view the inside of the bladder and urethra with a thin, lighted, flexible tube called a cystoscope to determine whether cancer has spread to the bladder

³ This procedure allows the doctor to see the colon and rectum with a thin, lighted, flexible tube called a sigmoidoscope to see if the cancer has spread to the rectum

⁴ This procedure allows the doctor to see the abdominal area with a thin, lighted, flexible tube called a laparoscope

News bits

Insurance firms asked to bring out simple, low-cost products

Source: *The Economic Times*

PSU insurance companies have been asked to devise simple and low-cost products keeping in mind the needs of the common man. They have been asked to use the Jan Dhan Yojna extension network to distribute their schemes. The companies were given this advice at a meeting called to review the performance of public sector insurance companies and also the insurance sector.

70% Indians Have No Health Insurance: Study

Source: *The New Indian Express*

70% of India's population has no health insurance and the country is short by 2 million beds compared with the global benchmark, according to a whitepaper released by a leading health sector body. The report 'Aarogya Bharat 2015', released by NATHEALTH, stated that India requires US\$ 3 trillion in cumulative funding and has the potential to generate 15 to 20 million jobs by 2025. "Private insurance is expected to grow at a compounded annual rate of about 25% to cover the top 25% of the population, by income level. Public insurance will provide essential care to 60% of the population by 2025," said Shivinder Mohan Singh, President of NATHEALTH.

'Standard protocol for treatment needed for affordable health insurance'

Source: *The Hindu Business Line*

Health insurance can be made affordable if there is a standard protocol for treatment and standardised cost for it, M Ramaprasad, member (non-life), IRDA said. IRDA has tied up with various industry associations like the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and FICCI to come out with a list of treatment procedures that can be standardised. Some 30 to 40-odd procedures have already been short-listed. "We are now working with the Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICAI) to determine the cost involvement for these procedures," Ramaprasad told.

IRDA further tightens reporting of group health pricing

Source: *Business Standard*

IRDA has tightened its norms around reporting of group health risks. In an additional communication to an earlier circular regarding the burning cost risk pricing, IRDA has said since industry-wide burning cost is not available with the Insurance Information Bureau of India (IIB) for group health; insurers should make detailed disclosures while underwriting such risks. The regulator has said if an insurer chooses to use the 'burning cost' of a particular risk-based on its own past experiences and the risk was earlier with the other insurers, then this has also to be reported to the board of directors.

Aditya Birla Group Plans to Foray Into Health Insurance Business

Source: *The Economic Times*

Aditya Birla Nuvo Ltd (ABNL) is planning to enter health insurance business in the country.

Cervical Cancer... contd...# 2

for different types of cancer. One tool that doctors use to describe the stage is the TNM system. TNM is an abbreviation for tumor (T), node (N), and metastasis (M). Doctors look at these three factors to determine the stage of cancer:

- How large is the primary tumor and where is it located? (Tumor, T)
- Has the tumor spread to the lymph nodes? (Node, N)
- Has the cancer metastasized to other parts of the body? (Metastasis, M)

The results are combined to determine the stage of cancer for each person. For cervical cancer, there are five stages: stage 0 (zero) and stages I through IV (one through four).

Treatment

Treatment for cervical cancer depends on several factors, such as the stage of the cancer, other health problems and preferences. Surgery, radiation, chemotherapy or a combination of the three may be used.

Hysterectomy: Early-stage cervical cancer is typically treated with surgery to remove the uterus (hysterectomy). It can cure early-stage cervical cancer and prevent recurrence.

Radiation: Radiation therapy uses high-powered energy beams, such as X-rays, to kill cancer cells. It may be used alone or with chemotherapy before surgery to shrink a tumor or after surgery to kill any remaining cancer cells. It can be given both externally and internally.

Chemotherapy: Chemotherapy uses medications, usually injected into a vein, to kill cancer cells. Low doses of chemotherapy are often combined with radiation therapy, since chemotherapy may enhance the effects of the radiation. Higher doses of chemotherapy are used to control advanced cervical cancer that may not be curable.

Getting care for symptoms and side effects: Cancer and its treatment often cause side effects. In addition to treatment to slow, stop or eliminate the cancer, an important part of cancer care is relieving its symptoms and side effects. This approach is called palliative or supportive care, and it includes supporting the patient with her physical, emotional and social needs. Palliative treatments vary widely and often include medication, nutritional changes, relaxation techniques and other therapies.

Follow-up care: After the treatment is complete, the doctor will recommend regular checkups.

Prevention

Cervical cancer is the only cancer that is preventable through vaccines which are now available in India and can be given to girls starting from the age of 12. Other methods of prevention include:

- Regular Pap Smear test
- Avoid smoking
- Limited no. of pregnancies (2 or 3)
- Avoid infection with HPV by practicing Safe sex

Conclusion

There is no single way to completely prevent cervical cancer, but there are a number of things that can help reduce your risk. It is highly recommended that women who are between the ages of 25 and 49 are screened every three years and women between the ages of 50 and 64 are screened every five years. Prevention is definitely better than cure.

Interview - Poly Cystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)

Dr. Y K Swapna (DNB, DGO, FICOG) of Swapna Health Care, Hyderabad



Explain the term 'PCOS'. What causes it?

PCOS (Polycystic Ovary Syndrome) is the most common endocrine disorder in women. It is aptly called a multigenic multifactorial disorder which involves multiple systems in the body. The cause of polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is not completely understood. It is believed that abnormal levels of the pituitary hormone luteinizing hormone (LH) and high levels of male hormones (androgens) interfere with normal function of the ovaries.

What are the Symptoms pertaining to PCOS?

The changes in hormone levels cause the classic symptoms of polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), including absent or irregular and infrequent menstrual periods, increased body hair growth or scalp hair loss, acne, gradual weight gain, obesity and difficulty in becoming pregnant. Early diagnosis of PCOS is essential since it has been linked to an increased risk of developing several metabolic disease such as diabetes and high cholesterol.

What increases the risks for PCOS?

Though the exact cause of PCOS is unknown, it is thought that there is a basic genetic basis for PCOS, which is polygenic (on multiple genes, not a single gene). It is well documented that PCOS is seen in families. (Sisters: 32-66%; mother 24-52%). Life style factors like sedentary life style, excess weight gain and obesity and stressful life precipitate the syndrome.

How does this condition affect the fertility / the ability to become pregnant?

- **Infertility:** PCOS leads to cycles where the egg is not released which leads to infertility.
- **Pregnancy loss:** Not only is it difficult to get pregnant, but PCOS also leads to increased rates of miscarriages (30-50% of early miscarriage, compared to 15% in general population).
- **Complications in pregnancy:** Women with PCOS also have higher risks of hypertension in pregnancy (PIH), gestational diabetes, preterm birth, and perinatal mortality over the general population.

What are the treatment options available?

- Oral contraceptives Pills (OCPs; with combined estrogen and progestin) are the most commonly used treatment for regulating menstrual periods in women with PCOS.
- Another method to treat menstrual irregularity is to take

a hormone called progestin (eg, Provera) for 10 to 14 days every one to three months.

- Weight loss is one of the most effective approaches for managing insulin abnormalities, irregular menstrual periods and other symptoms of PCOS.

What steps should be taken to keep PCOS in check?

Life style modification is the best change women with PCOS can make which includes weight loss, exercise and meditation.

Any general advice / suggestions for our readers

We as doctors are seeing a huge upswing in the number of cases of PCOS in the clinics. As genetic predispositions cannot be changed, what can be changed is the life style. Though materially more endowed, this generation seems to have a higher stress levels and sometimes quality of life (health and happiness) seems to be lower. We all have to look inward and be able to correct these aspects to make a significant change in our lifestyles to achieve long lasting health and happiness.

"Views expressed herein are purely personal and do not reflect the views of the Hospital"

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News bits

Group health insurance premiums might go up

Source: Business Standard

For group health insurance scheme, employers are taking some steps to reduce health insurance costs. Some of them are: reduction in the coverage, sharing of the premiums, Reduction in sum assured, a separate plan for parents-for which the full premium is borne by employee. Such steps might become more common as insurance companies raise premium rates. While the natural increase in health care costs due to medical inflation is a big reason, another is the strict stance being taken by the regulator. Recently, the IRDA issued guidelines on the pricing of risk. While insurance companies are yet to finalise the premiums, there are chances that group health premiums could see an increase.

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