



Making complex decisions when confronted with conflicting opinions

Mr. Das lives in a small town in Odisha. One day he felt a small bump on his tongue. It looked suspicious and wouldn't go away. His family took him to the local hospital and quickly realized that the hospital was ill equipped to determine what it was. They then went to the district hospital where a diagnosis of oral cancer was confirmed but they were referred to a cancer center in Bhubaneswar for treatment. The family traveled to Bhubaneswar and consulted with oncologists at two cancer centers, each of whom gave them conflicting opinions. The oncologist at the private hospital recommended immediate surgery and the oncologist at the other hospital recommended radiation. The family had visited four hospitals in three different towns and still had no clarity what to do. What was the best course of action for Mr. Das? Should he undergo surgery or radiation to be cured?

Debashis, Mr. Das's nephew who worked in Pune, was consulted. Debashis researched online and got to know that Tata Memorial Center had a way by which they could get an opinion from an expert. "It initially sounded too good to be true. Here we were not able to get a junior doctor at a local cancer center to see the patient without a one week wait time and this service spoke of getting the case reviewed by senior oncologists at the country's best center, all within a 24 hour timeframe. I was unsure but given the situation, I went ahead and registered on www.navya.care. Within an hour of my registering, a patient advocate from Navya called and explained the complete process to me. He was knowledgeable, empathetic, and thorough in understanding my case and letting me know what reports I would need to upload to get a treatment opinion. This comprehensive approach reassured me about my decision to reach out to get an online expert opinion". Debashis uploaded the reports and filled in the forms that described the complete history including the events of the previous weeks and the conflicting opinions they had received. "We needed to know what a Tata expert would recommend in my uncle's case."

The case was sent to multiple experts who consulted with one another before providing the recommended treatment plan. A diagnostic oncologist confirmed that it was a locally advanced case of oral cancer. Based on this diagnosis, the surgical oncologist, medical oncologist, and radiation oncologist arrived at a recommendation of total glossectomy (removal of the tongue). Further, since Mr. Das held a Below Poverty Line Card, Navya processed the case without even the minimal processing fee, subsidized by Tata Trusts.

Dr Pankaj Chaturvedi is professor of surgical oncology treating oral cancer patients at Tata Memorial Centre. He says, "Our intent is to recommend a treatment plan that gives the best possible chance for cure. Surgery can accomplish this but not all cancers are operable. In some cases, we seek neoadjuvant therapy (treatment provided before surgery) to reduce the size of the tumour before going in for the surgical option. In such cases, a medical and radiation oncologist will discuss the more suitable therapy."

Urging family members of cancer patients, Gitika Srivastava, Founder of Navya, shares her

personal viewpoint: "Most people who have had any experience with cancer are aware of Tata Memorial Centre as one of the largest tertiary care expert centers in the world. However not everyone from far flung areas can come to Mumbai or is aware of the significance of a proper choice in treatment to a change in outcomes. Given the cases we have seen, we would urge everyone to get an expert opinion online at navya.care. You can be assured that the opinion rests on the experience of world renowned cancer experts and follows evidence based protocols best suited to your loved one's specific case."

Navya offers online opinions from cancer experts at Tata Memorial Centre and centers part of National Cancer Grid, a consortium of cancer centers including AIIMS, Adyar Cancer Institute, Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology, etc.

Tata Memorial Centre (TMC) tmc.gov.in / National Cancer Grid (NCG), tmc.gov.in/ncg

TMC is Asia's largest leading tertiary care expert cancer center, seeing over 67,000 cancer patients every year. Its strength necessitates a responsibility to make its expertise available to patients across India and developing countries, especially those who reside in locations where there are no expert cancer care centers. The NCG is a consortium of 104 cancer centers, with a mandate to standardize cancer care, nationally. NCG is the largest global network of cancer centers collaborating to use technology and training to bring cancer expertise to every oncologist and cancer patient in India.

Navya www.navya.info

Navya is a clinical informatics and patient services organization with a unique understanding of cancer patients and oncologists and a core commitment to cancer care. With a proven track record of successfully implementing innovative solutions that are low cost and effective, Navya is the first to develop technology systems specific to Indian cancer data for use by cancer patients and oncologists in India. **Contact:** Gitika Srivastava | gitika@post.harvard.edu

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