

ONE MAN'S QUEST FOR BETTER TREATMENT FOR CANCER

Pioneering robotic cancer surgery

India is booming in the healthcare sector with a number of innovations in the field of drugs, treatment procedures, diagnostics and patient care evolving every day. With every passing day, the urge to enhance quality of overall delivery of healthcare services is also rising. While we are aiming to improve the healthcare delivery and care, the healthcare burden due to cancer is also increasing simultaneously.

India witnesses cancer related death rate of 79 per 1,00,000 and accounts for over 6% of total deaths. These statistics are alarming and reminds us of the fact that cancer is not a rare disease any more. Despite all the recent advances for early cancer detection, it still remains the leading cause of death worldwide as many patients are diagnosed late.

Cancer is increasingly becoming a global health issue as it is both a lifestyle disease as well as an old age disease and the cases are on the rise every day. While creating awareness is the first and foremost step to reduce the increasing number of cases, the global initiative and commitment to invest in cancer control and treatment as a public health priority is the need of the hour. When we talk about global and national initiative to be taken to curb cancer, it also becomes a responsibility of the healthcare providers, whether public, private or a medical professional to come forward and deliver the best treatment and care in the field of medical sciences.

Dr Sandeep Nayak, Director of surgical oncology at Fortis Cancer Institute and MACS Clinic, Bangalore, is one such maverick cancer surgeon who has worked for the development of cancer care over the years. Dr Nayak started his medical journey from Kasturba Medical College, Mangalore in 1993 and trained in reputed institutions like Calicut Medical College and Chittaranjan National Cancer Institute, Kolkata. His endeavors took him to various parts of the world finally reaching Bangalore in 2012 to join prestigious Kidwai Cancer Institute. He had a illustrious career there till 2017 and then took the responsibility as Director of surgical oncology at Fortis Hospital, Bangalore. Dr Nayak's contribution towards the hospital also helped in launching the Fortis Cancer Institute and making it a the renowned centre for minimal access oncosurgery. He is well known for his surgical skills in the conventional open cancer surgery or minimally invasive laparoscopic and robotic surgery. There are very few onco-surgeons who are as proficient as him in this field and rightly so, he is considered one of the best surgical oncologists in India.



DR SANDEEP NAYAK, Director of Surgical Oncology at Fortis Cancer Institute and MACS Clinic, Bangalore

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DISRUPTING THE ONCOLOGY VERTICAL

Years of practice makes you perfect. Known for laparoscopic and robotic surgeries across India and the world, Dr Sandeep Nayak's journey has also been incredibly inspiring. When he first started his journey in laparoscopic and robotic cancer surgery in Bangalore in 2012, it was not a very well accepted field.

The facilities were not enough to support advanced surgeries. Starting with his clinic which is called MACS Clinic, which stands for Minimal Access Cancer Surgery, he dedicatedly invested his time in the field and successfully fostered it in Bangalore. His vision is to curtail the pain of cancer patients with earlier discharge and less complications. With the aim to achieve this, he advocated laparoscopic and robotic surgeries which come with several benefits over open surgery. To sum it up, the incisions made in laparoscopy and robotic surgery are much smaller than the incisions made in an open surgery which hastens recovery, has less blood loss and lesser pain.

However, these require a higher skill sets that very few surgeons manage to master. Likewise, there are certain unique surgical techniques developed by him which includes, RABIT the robotic surgery for thyroid and Robotic neck dissection. This modern robotic-assisted technique for treating thyroid tumor is a scarless treatment for thyroid tumour removal. Dr Nayak is considered a pioneer in using these newer techniques which is what makes him earn the title of 'One of the most renowned oncologists in India'.

Many surgeons across the world have trained under him and are practicing his techniques. His expertise in complex surgeries where results are difficult to achieve have brought him laurels. Many surgeries like robotic intersphincteric resection for rectal cancer and robotic esophageal cancer surgeries are performed by a very few surgeons. He has more than 15 research papers in reputed oncology journals which are



all exclusively contributing to the development of cancer treatment. These publications include some of the defining papers in cancer surgery in India.

A LOVED TEACHER

He was a teaching faculty at Kidwai cancer institute, Bangalore which is a premier teaching institute in India. He had performed many laparoscopic surgeries when he was at the institute and trained many cancer surgeons who are now giving their services across India. He is one of the most sought-after surgeons for live demonstrations of surgeries related to cancer. He conducts fellowship in minimally invasive surgical oncology which is one of its kind in India and is one of the most sought-after courses by cancer surgeons in India.

CARING FOR TOMORROW: GIVING IT BACK TO THE SOCIETY

Prevention is better than cure. He is passionate about cancer awareness along with prevention and has even written a booklet on this. His efforts in the field of awareness have brought him many laurels. He also is the managing trustee of an NGO called Connect-to-Heal which is involved in cancer awareness and prevention. He has played a major role in driving the tobacco cessation programs, which aims to reduce the risk of cancer among the population. His talks on cancer awareness and healthy living are very popular across India.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO CHERISH

Though he has many achievements in his career, he was awarded the 'rising star in oncology' award by Times of India in 2019. Dr Nayak was felicitated with the Times Health Excellence 2018 Award for "Excellence in Oncology", bolstering his reputation as one of the best surgical oncologists in India. Both the awards were in recognition for his innovative work in Robotic and Laparoscopic cancer surgery. He has been bestowed with many other awards in his career.

In the field of oncology, he is always believed to be an innovator as compared to a follower. His journey and achievements has been a milestone for all the aspiring oncologists who want to follow his footsteps in the quest to winning over cancer. ■