BioSpectrum
the business of Bio & Health Sciences
ASIA EDITION

GCI extends programmes to Bangladesh for underserved cancer patients

October 30, 2020 | News

With the launch of new monthly Tumor Boards that help physicians and oncologists in developing countries connect directly to US physicians by videoconference to discuss challenging cancer cases and ask for advice.



Global Cancer Institute (GCI), which is focused on improving survival rates for underserved cancer patients worldwide, announced that it has extended its programmes to Bangladesh, with the launch of new monthly Tumor Boards that help physicians and oncologists in developing countries connect directly to US physicians by videoconference to discuss challenging cancer cases and ask for advice. The GCI Tumor Boards will be co-hosted by the Bangladesh Society for Breast Cancer Study (BSBCS), a nonprofit organisation with the mission to eradicate breast cancer as a life-threatening disease.

Tumor Boards are common practice within US hospitals, and have been proven to help boost survival rates for patients by enabling physicians to resolve challenging cases.

According to the ASCO Post, one in 10 deaths in Bangladesh is from cancer. Bangladesh spends 2.8 per cent of its gross domestic product on healthcare, which is the 10th lowest in the world, impacting availability of preventive services. The country also has limited hospital resources, with 0.6 hospitals beds and 0.36 physicians per 1,000 people. (By contrast, the US statistics are 2.8 and 2.6 respectively)

"Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in Bangladesh, and even basic preventive measures such as breast palpation are not available in primary care settings," said Dr Arunangshu Das, General Secretary, BSBCS. "Once a woman develops breast cancer, her treatment options here are limited as there is tremendous shortage of oncologists. Our partnership with GCI to bring regular monthly Tumor Boards to Bangladesh offers patients and their physicians a lifeline to effective treatment."

Dr Don S Dizon, Co-Chief Medical Officer, GCI and Director, Medical Oncology, Rhode Island Hospital, will lead the local Bangladesh programme. "Bangladesh is in a cancer crisis. This is an area where GCI can make a huge impact," said Dr Dizon. "We're looking forward to working with our local colleagues to improve cancer care on the ground in Bangladesh."