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Cancer care in India needs urgent attention'

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Singapore: Recently Aster Medcity, Kochi, India, hosted an international Cancer Conclave in its campus, called the 'Horizons in Cancer Care.' The Conclave aimed at exploring new horizons and trends for cancer management in India. The event was attended by over 150 national and international delegates from the medical community, who explored the latest developments and technological innovations in cancer care.

The event, held on November 09, 2014, was spearheaded by Dr MV Pillai, chairperson of Aster Medcity oncology center and Dr Harish Pillai, CEO, Aster Medcity.

The conclave served as a platform to analyze the demographics of cancer care in India and deliberated on harnessing treatment resources and economics in treating cancer. The experts also analyzed the cancer burden in the country and various advances in medical oncology that can help improvise cancer management.

Speaking at the event, Dr Azad Moopen, chairman, Aster DM Healthcare, said, "Millions of new cancer cases are diagnosed every year in India. The number of deaths due to cancer is expected to rise to 1.2 million every year by 2035. Through Aster Medcity we will provide best-in-class treatment to our cancer patients."

Dr Robert Gallo, co-discoverer of HIV and founder of the institute of Human Virology, explained about the unique Global Virus Network formed under his directorship to bolster viral epidemic surveillance and research. He highlighted that viral infection

was also a major cause of cancer development and urged global virologists to utilize the GVN platform and address the medical challenges posed by viruses.

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Under the guidance of Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, India, a National Cancer Grid has been formed, funded by the government of India. The grid collaborates a network of 52 top cancer centers in India, to build cancer awareness, research and training. Explaining the initiative, Dr CS Pramesh, oncosurgeon, Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, mentioned, "The cancer grid will help in bringing in cancer treatments to the remote parts of the country that still lack in basic cancer screening facilities. Through our initiative we are planning to provide cancer care to millions of people in North and East India where cancer mortality is very high."

Dr Harish Pillai, CEO, Aster Medcity, said, "Awareness of cancer in India is very low. This conclave aims at highlighting the need of cancer registry in India that helps track cancer incidents and the respective developments. At Aster Medcity, we are announcing an unique Oncology Center of Excellence that will help in bringing in latest advancements and treatments in cancer detection and cure."

With the number of cases soaring, experts urged that cancer care in India needed immediate attention. The delegates also highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships for nurturing cancer innovations in the country. Many oncology experts also pointed out the lack of early detection and screening facilities in North and East India that led to high mortality rates in cancer.