

Mitra Sandesh

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I CAN & I WILL

People often neglect preventative measures on their health until a serious issue occurs. This is very common in every family. Although it is well understood fact that prevention is better than cure, we seldom take the preventive steps at the right time. The behavioral patterns are more reactive in nature and they keep procrastinating. Introducing healthcare principles and preventive measures early during the school upbringing helps in the future generations.

“ Changing your attitude from reactive actions to taking proactive prevention steps will lead towards positive health continuum. ”

Amar Bhaskar



ATTENTION TO PREVENTION

Dr. Suneetha N

Radiation Oncologist, Aster group of institutions

The Mitra CanCare Foundation, in collaboration with the Inner Wheel Club of Bangalore Blossoms, hosted an impactful health awareness session titled "Attention to Prevention" under Taruni Mitra Program. Held on September 24th, 2024, at Sri Yogeshwarananda Eng. Primary & High School in Halasuru, the event featured Dr. Suneetha N, a distinguished Radiation Oncologist from the Aster Group of Institutions.

Dedicated to women's health awareness and care, the session emphasized the critical role of early detection and preventive measures in the fight against cancer. By bringing expert medical insights directly to the community, the initiative successfully fostered a culture of proactive health management and informed wellbeing. The program aimed to create awareness about Cervical Cancer, one of the few cancers that can be prevented through HPV vaccination. Parents of school children aged 8-14 years attended the session.

Understanding the Threat: Cervical Cancer

The session started by identifying cervical cancer as a major health crisis, particularly in India. It is the second most common cancer among Indian women, primarily caused by persistent infection with high-risk strains of HPV (specifically types 16 and 18).

Dr. Suneetha highlighted several risk factors, including:

- Early marriage or early sexual activity.
- Multiple sexual partners.
- Poor personal hygiene and low socioeconomic status.
- Lifestyle factors like smoking and long-term use of oral contraceptives.

Crucially, the presentation noted that cervical cancer often remains asymptomatic in its early stages. By the time symptoms like irregular bleeding, foul-smelling discharge, or pelvic pain appear, the disease may already be advanced.

The Power of Prevention: The HPV Vaccine

The core of the presentation is the HPV Vaccine, described as a primary prevention tool.

- Who should get it? The primary target is girls aged 9

to 14 years, as the vaccine is most effective before any exposure to the virus. However, catch-up vaccinations are recommended up to age 26, and can be administered up to age 45.

- Dosage: For those aged 9-14, a two-dose schedule (0 and 6 months) is required. For those 15 and older, a three-dose schedule (0, 1-2, and 6 months) is necessary.
- Efficacy: The vaccine is highly effective, providing nearly 100% protection against the virus strains that cause 70% of cervical cancers.

Screening and Early Detection

Dr. Suneetha emphasized that the vaccine does not replace the need for regular screening. Secondary prevention through PAP Smears and HPV DNA testing is vital for women over 30. These tests can identify "pre-cancerous" lesions—abnormal cell changes that can be treated easily before they ever turn into cancer. The presentation concludes with a powerful message of empowerment. By combining vaccination for young girls and regular screening for adult women, the burden of cervical cancer can be significantly reduced.