MUMBAIKARS JOIN HANDS WITH TATA MEMORIAL'S ADOPT-A-PATIENT INITIATIVE TO HELP 45 KIDS IN NEED

YOU TOO CAN SAVE A KID'S LIFE

Tata memorial's paediatric care department has 1,300 new admissions a year. That's 1,300 children under 15 that are diagnosed with cancer - most often a form of leukaemia. Dr Shripad Banavali, head of pediatric and medical oncology says that 75 per cent of paediatric cancers are completely curable. But treatment usually costs in the vicinity of Rs 6 lakh, and that figure can easily go way up.

While many of these children have families that are entirely incapable of taking on the burden of such a sum, there are avenues of relief available - if they can access them. As is the norm, the poorest of the poor often don't have the necessary documentation to take advantage of formalised processes.

But Tata Memorial, the only oncological specialty hospital in the state, has begun a new two-year-old 15 individual who chooses to remain unnamed, came up to them asking if he could adopt one patient at a time and help to fund treatment, under this crowdfunding initiative called Children's Cancer Care. The Impact Foundation set up the "Adopt-a-Patient" initiative, which co-ordinates between the adopter and the adoptee. "When we approach charitable trusts, it takes at least 45 days to get some funds. But our individual donors donate within 2-3 days - a cost certificate and disease summary from the hospital is enough proof. Cheques are given in the name of the hospital to ensure transparency," said Kiratmi Jata, secretary of Impact.

This, clubbed with other efforts by Tata hospital like providing accommodation, nutrition and education to paediatric patients, has drastically reduced the dropout rate to 4.8 per cent from 25 per cent three years ago. "We had many patients dropping out of treatment due to lack of funds. We are thus trying to bring in a holistic approach by providing all the needs of such poor patients," said Dr Banavali.

While some donors pay from their pocket, others have constructed relief centres and friends to also contribute to the cause. And till now, 45 children in cancer, in vitro, have received the help they need from generous and compassionate givers.

SHRECHANAR MEHTA, 9, acute lymphoblastic leukaemia

Shrechanar Mehta is 9. He needs Rs 5-6 lakh for his treatment, which is going to last for two years. He is one of the 15 children-fundraiser brand interior designer Jinesh Mehta has adopted.

"We fund treatments, and are also looking at needs like accommodation and daily expenses to motivate them to continue the treatment," says Jinesh, who has done this for over a year, with help from eight friends and two siblings.

All stories don’t have happy endings. Rekha’s first adoptee was a seven-year-old boy suffering from leukaemia whose father could not even afford to buy a train or bus ticket. The boy died his life while undergoing the treatment.

"I cannot completely rule out their nicknames but I can try to make some difference in their lives. As soon as I got to know about a patient instead of helping them directly, I started raising money through my group and funds start coming in."

Jinesh Mehta, 9, acute lymphoblastic leukemia

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Sahiba Khatoo, 4, Bone Cancer

4-year-old Sahiba Khatoo has already partially lost a limb to cancer. Little Sahiba is from Madipet, a small village and her father is a daily-wage worker who cannot afford even a fraction of her treatment.

But Bhavika Shah has taken her under her wing, raised funds to help her and is currently looking after her daily needs.

ALKA SIDDiqui, 41, Blood Cancer

Vishal Vishwakarma, 11, Blood Cancer

Young Vishal Vishwakarma’s father is a daily-wage worker with an uncertain income and utterly unable to afford his son’s treatment.

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