

ASHVINS: Managing Depression in Cancer Patients in India – January 2025

FACTS:

- Mental disorders, due to biological or psychosocial issues are common in patients suffering from cancers, and 4-week prevalence of any mental disorder is 32%.
- Depression accounts for most mental disorders in cancer patients, with prevalence rates ranging from 15-28%.
- To the best of our knowledge, there is no existing national guideline that addresses cancer and comorbid depression care in India.

PROJECT CYCLE: 2023 – 2028.

PARTNERS:

All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS, New Delhi, India)

Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education & Research (PGIMER, Chandigarh, India)

Vijayanagar Institute of Medical Sciences (VIMS, Bellary, Karnataka, India)

SUPPORTERS:

DBT/Wellcome Trust India Alliance

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Professor Pallab Maulik


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BACKGROUND:

- Depression is often found in patients with cancer. Treating depression alongside cancer can help improve overall care and wellbeing.
- Not treating depression can significantly affect a person's health and place a heavy financial burden on the healthcare system.
- Monitoring mood changes and understanding how they relate to cancer or other life stressors is an important part of comprehensive cancer care.
- Behavioural Activation (BA) is effective in reducing depression related to cancer.

AIM:

- To develop and test a technology-based platform to provide mental health care for patients in India with breast, cervix, ovarian, lung, prostate, colon, head, and neck cancers, who also have depression.
- This platform will be evaluated to see how effective and cost-efficient it is in real-world healthcare settings, with or without using BA.

METHODS:

- Conduct formative research to design a suitable technology-based platform for delivering mental health services, including modules for BA.
- Conduct a small-scale trial with three groups over nine months to collect early data for designing a larger, more comprehensive study.
- Conduct a three-group trial that runs alongside each other to test different approaches:
 - Group 1 receives standard care.
 - Group 2 monitors their depression symptoms and gets care from mental health professionals.
 - Group 3 gets the same care as Group 2, plus training in BA.

This hybrid trial will be conducted over a 12-month period to assess the effectiveness of these approaches.

IMPACT

- **Policy:** Support the National Cancer Control Program and identify new models of care for patients in India which could lead to new clinical guidelines.
- **Academic and research:** Provide critical knowledge to strengthen health systems, transform healthcare delivery, and make it more efficient. Develop treatment algorithms relevant to the Indian context.
- **Societal:** Improve the mental wellbeing of patients and families and have direct/indirect impacts on treatment outcomes for cancer, with possible cost savings.

CONTACT:

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