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Pune Heroes: NS Nyayapathi

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■ A terminal triumph

Army veteran NS Nyayapathi has provided palliative cure gratis to more than 35,000 cancer patients in 25 years

A helpless Colonel (Retd) N S Nyayapathi saw his mother suffering from excruciating pain during the advanced stages of kidney cancer. Her death was a wake-up call for Nyayapathi to take the dreaded malady by the horns in a bid to save thousands of others. He took premature retirement from the army and along with his wife, Dr Madhuri Kavoori, founded Care India Medical Society (CIMS) in 1993. It's a unique public charitable trust dedicated to treat terminally ill patients free of cost.

“Ever since the foundation of CIMS till now, it has been a long-fraught journey, a struggle we overcame only by the grace of God. Earlier, we didn't even have a permanent place to sit. We operated out of a small space, just a table and chair provided to us at Shirole Road, Shivajinagar, which we could only use for two hours. We got our own small office in Deccan only in 1997,” recalled the 75-year-old resident of NIBM Road, Kondhwa. He worked hard to make CIMS grow steadily from a single office table to a 15-bed hospital called Vishranti.

A mechanical engineer by profession, Nyayapathi served in the Corps of Electrical and Mechanical Engineers of the Indian Army before quitting to dedicate his life to cancer cure after his mother's death. All of 1992, he visited the UK and the US in search of answers to various questions he had about the disease. Many Indian doctors and friends in the US advised him to take up preventive and early detection strategies, as well as venture into palliative care, which was then a relatively new concept in India. “When I spoke to people, saying I want to provide free treatment to cancer patients, they asked me how I would run it gratis as it requires a lot of money. They said I couldn't turn patients away due to a fund crunch. However, despite no financial aid from the government, we are happy to be able to run the organisation well. We don't have a lot of money, but enough to

get by,” he said.

Over the years, CIMS started various programmes like Satseva (home care for advanced stage patients in 1994), Matruseva (health maintenance programme for women, prevention and early detection, in 1998), Vishranti (respite and palliative care centre as an in-patient facility in 2007) and CANTREAT (therapeutic services in 2013). Till now, CIMS has benefited almost 35,000 cancer patients through their programmes.

“We look past our struggles every time someone is benefited by coming to CIMS. In fact, I am grateful to see people visiting our institute and journeying to recovery through our treatment,” beamed Nyayapathi. All services like screening tests, radiation, chemotherapy, surgeries and palliative care are provided free of cost. They take only Rs 10 as registration fee for the patients. “We give priority to women as they are the ones who compromise on their own health while giving their all to the family. Only male patients suffering from cancer of the head and neck are provided treatment at CIMS. We do not treat male patients for other cancers,” he said.

His next objective is to offer early detection facilities nationwide as a coordinated effort for self-sustaining mass screening programmes in urban areas. Nyayapathi also wants to provide free service to rural areas; promote cancer education and usher in preventive oncology as an effective tool to combat cancer; establish cancer care centres for terminally ill patients; and also promote cancer research in India.

“A huge number of patients suffering from cancer lack awareness. Women don’t go to doctors for early detection owing to poor financial conditions. That’s why risks of the disease increase,” he rued, saying other people should also join him in the cause.

But CIMS will not be confined to Pune for long as Nyayapathi plans to spread its reach to rural areas as well. “We are planning to establish three-pronged nodal points — with Kolhapur, Sangli and Satara on one axis, Akola, Baramati and Nagpur on the other, and maybe Sholapur and Daund on the third. We plan to organise trained staff to reach out to the villages around these places and provide at least basic pain management to improve the quality of life of those suffering with advanced and terminal cancers,” he shared.

INITIATIVE

Providing cancer care free of cost

THE HERO

NS Nyayapathi

NOMINATED FOR

Founding CIMS, a charitable trust to treat the terminally ill

GETS MY VOTE

■ I have seen Nyayapathi build up the organisation from scratch. The patient's family is deeply distressed both by the deadly disease and the expenses for treatment. In such cases, CIMS provides a helping hand and is a shining example for many other organisations.

— **Farook Merchant, businessman**

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