

CASE STUDY - HEMANT LODHA

In India, out of the 10 lakh new cases of cancer detected every year, 70% are in advanced stages. Out of these, less than 1% of cancer patients have access to palliative care. Organized pain management and supportive care is scarcely available for cancer patients in advanced stages of the disease.

The goal of palliative care is to relieve the suffering of patients and their families by a comprehensive assessment and treatment of physical, psychosocial, emotional and spiritual symptoms experienced by patients. Our focus is patients belonging to lower socio economic sections of the society who have minimal or zero access to pain relief and symptom management, two aspects that can significantly improve the quality of life of patients in advanced stages of cancer.

In the course of our journey in providing pain relief and pain management services to cancer patients, we come across a few patients who leave unforgettable impressions in our hearts. One such person was Hemant Lodha, a young boy who allowed us to be a part of his journey for 10 years.

Hemant Lodha was registered for palliative care with Vishranti Hospital on 1st April 2009. He was diagnosed with Osteogenic Sarcoma, a common kind of bone tumor which occurs in teenagers. He was given prosthesis at Command Hospital, Pune where he spent around six months. After he was discharged from Command Hospital, he understood that he was suffering from an incurable disease. Knowledge of his condition made him a recluse. He went into a shell and refused to come out and listen to any suggestions or take any treatment.



At the behest of Doctors of Command Hospital and requests by members of Hemant's community, the Founder Trustee of Care India Medical Society visited him personally at his home. He persuaded Hemant to get admitted in Vishranti Hospital to receive proper care and treatment. On his subsequent visit to Command Hospital for review, he was shifted to Vishranti Hospital.

The case posed many challenges, the greatest being in positivizing his outlook towards the treatment and towards his residual life.



Hemant was very well taken care of by the nursing staff under the able guidance of the Matron and Doctors at Vishranti Hospital. He was given expensive antibiotics for healing his wound and minute details of his comfort were closely looked into. He was administered 40 mg of morphine tablets (4x10mg tablets) every four hours to control his pain. This medication continued till his leg was amputated twenty-two months later. Morphine gave him adequate pain relief and improved his quality of life.



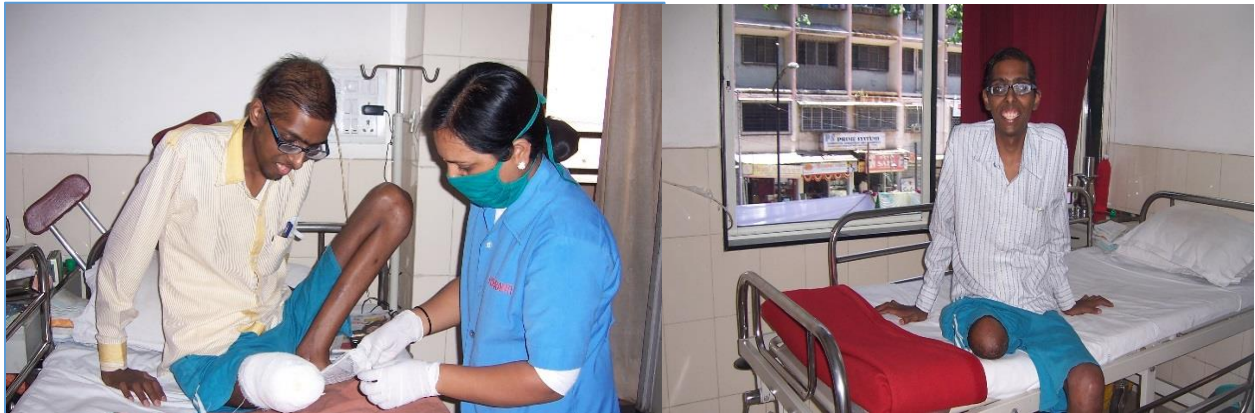
Slowly, Hemant became friendly with the staff and started expressing his concerns about the survival of his parents and his love for cricket and football. A television was placed in front of him with a long chord with headphones for him to watch IPL and Federal Cup.

This diverted his mind from concerns and worries about his family and his recovery became faster.

On the advice of Dr. Madhuri, Medical Director at Vishranti, Hemant was referred to Oncologist Surgeon at Command Hospital for a possible surgical intervention. After

investigations, Col. Tyagi (now Brigadier retired) advised amputation above right knee. The surgery was undertaken at Command Hospital free of cost.

In May 2011, his leg was amputated and a high dose of painkillers (morphine) was withdrawn. He was readmitted in Vishranti to receive post-operative care.



Hemant was discharged on 3rd July, 2011 when his condition stabilized. After discharge, Hemant joined a napkin factory to earn a living for his parents.



Between 2011 and 2017, while Hemant was working in the factory, he created a WhatsApp group of his friends which also included the Doctors and nursing staff from Vishranti Hospital. He shared greetings on all occasions of festivals and national days of celebration.

From his posts on WhatsApp group, spanning over a period of 6-7 years, it was evident that he remained positive throughout.

Hemant used to visit the Hospital every first Thursday (being a holiday for him) of the month to relive pleasant memories of his stay at Vishranti Hospital. He cherished the bonds he had created with the hospital staff.

As the disease progressed and new symptoms emerged, Hemant was admitted in Vishranti multiple times for pain symptom control, care and comfort.

During one of his admissions, the Commandant of the Armed Forces Medical College visited our hospital. The Commandant, Air Marshal Keshav Rao was moved by the attention given to Hemant by the hospital staff and offered help in providing free Australian foot through the Artificial Limb Center, Pune (ALC, under his Command).

When Hemant was sent to ALC, the orthopedic surgeon advised a PET scan which revealed that the disease had spread to his spinal cord and lungs. Therefore, the idea of giving him an Australian foot was abandoned. He was given crutches to lead a normal life.

In November 2017, Hemant was admitted with difficult symptoms which could not be managed as an outpatient. He continued staying in the hospital till January, 2018.

On 7th January 2018, the Founder Trustee visited the hospital as he had to accompany the Matron to buy special hospital requirements. He met Hemant on the same day and reassured him of help and support for his family. He also promised to visit him after finishing his work.

On their way back to the hospital, the Matron advised the Founder Trustee to get back home as it had been a tiresome day. On a premonition, after reaching the hospital, the Founder Trustee insisted on seeing the patient despite the Matron's advice. He walked up to Hemant's bed and had a picture clicked with him.

Ironically, when the Founder Trustee visited the Hospital around 10:30 am the next day, Hemant had passed away. Just before his passing away, Hemant had bid Goodbye to the nursing staff and expressed his gratitude to the Hospital.



Hemant lost his battle to cancer on January 8, 2018. A person who had only a year to live fought and lived a life of dignity for 10 years after his cancer diagnosis. While his journey was full of trials and tribulations, he fought like a true stoic.

A person suffering from a deadly disease and belonging to poor socio-economic strata could be managed and a life could be preserved for over 10 years with home and hospital care. Hemant's case gave us deep insights in patient care and taught us valuable lessons. Memories of our interactions with him will continue guiding and spearheading us in our mission to alleviate pain and human suffering.