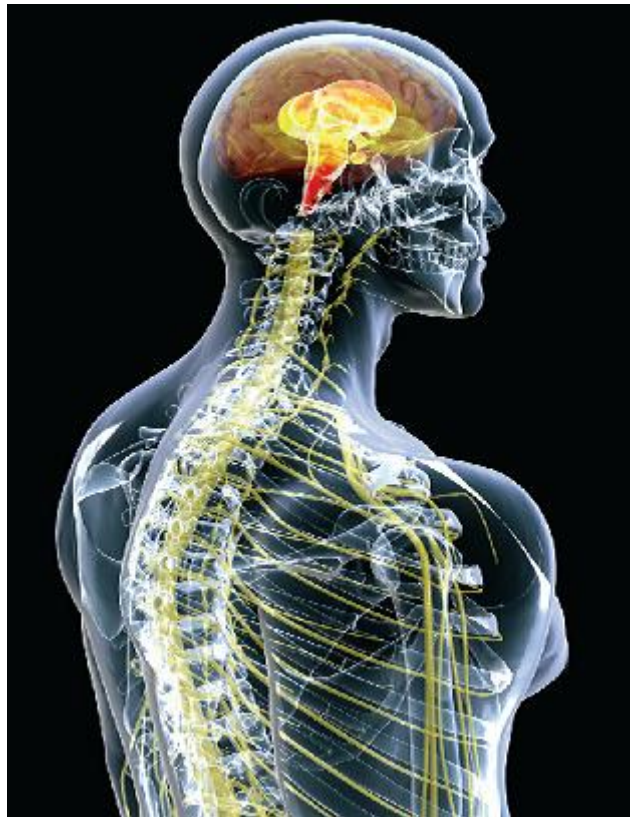


India sitting on a cancer bomb for men

87,000 New Cases Every Year



India's projection for cancer among men in 2020 is now out and it isn't looking very good. The country will see a 20% overall increase — 87,000 additional cases of cancer every year in men by 2020. According to Indian Council of Medical Research's latest report, fresh cases of cancer annually among men will increase from 4.47 lakh in 2008 to 5.34 lakh by 2020. Cancers in almost all sites will see an increase, except that of the oesophagus which will actually see a dip from 23,573 fresh cases in 2008 to 20,642 cases in 2020.


The report on cancer trends, that tracks the deadly disease over 24 years and is yet to be made public, says that incidence of mouth cancer will see the highest increase by almost 66%, from 28,066 fresh cases per year to 46,785 in 2020. However, in absolute numbers, lung cancer will top the list with 51,194 new cases annually by 2020 as against 42,863 in 2008.

“Around 30% of all cancers in India are due to smoking and chewing tobacco and it will be the main cause for this increase in both lung and mouth cancers. Therefore, it is vital that India takes its present ban on smoking in public and pictorial warnings on tobacco packets seriously,” said Dr Vinod Raina, head of medical oncology at AIIMS.

Dr Raina added, “However, the increase in the absolute number of cancer cases will be due to India’s aging population. It is called age migration. Peak incidents of cancer is in 60s.” ICMR director general Dr V M Katoch told TOI “cancer becoming a huge burden in India and will require increased attention. With industrialisation in India increasing and the population ageing, it is but natural that numbers will increase.” Cancer of the prostate and brain/nervous systems will see almost an equal amount of increase by around 19% in the next 12 years. Cases of prostate cancer will increase to 30,185 by 2020 as against 25,273 cases in 2008. Cancer of the brain/nervous system which recorded 18,238 cases in 2008 would increase to 21,782 during the same time.

Runaway Threat

	2008	2010	2015	2020
All Sites*	4,47,399	4,62,408	4,97,081	5,34,354
Lung	42,863	44,301	47,623	51,194
Mouth	28,066	30,921	38,380	46,785
Prostate	25,273	26,120	28,079	30,185
Brain/NS	18,238	18,850	20,263	21,782
Larynx	24,356	25,173	27,060	29,089
Rectum	11,738	12,132	13,041	14,019
Stomach	24,993	25,831	27,768	29,850



* All figures for men

Cancer of the tongue, larynx and stomach will all see an increase of around 16%. The number of liver cancers will increase from 14,062 cases in 2008 to 16,795 in 2020. A senior ICMR official told TOI, “This new data will help in reorienting the country’s cancer control programme. We now know which cancers will require urgent attention. Cancer of the colon (11,236 cases in 2008-13,420 in 2020) and rectum (11,738 cases in 2008-14,019 new cases in 2020) is following the pattern of the West due to low fibre diet.”

The official added, “Brain tumors are going up sharply and we definitely need to study how much of the cause is the use of mobile phones.” Talking about what the government was doing to combat cancer, a health ministry official said it was ready with a National Cancer Fund — the first such financial pool for a single disease that will cover all costs incurred by below poverty line (BPL) patients affected by cancer. The Rs 100-crore fund was cleared by the finance ministry recently.

The Centre has also sanctioned Rs 2,500 crore under the 11th five-year plan for the National Cancer Control Programme — a 10-fold increase compared to the 10th plan allocation of Rs 250 crore (TNN, 3 October 2009).