

Letter to the Editor

Official guidelines for cancer in India: A corrigendum

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Dear Editor,

We read with great interest an article entitled “Afro Middle East Asian symposium on cancer cooperation”.^[1] We commend Parikh *et al.*,^[1] for their meticulous efforts of putting forth us the current oncology status of 13 countries. The information provided by Parikh *et al.*,^[1] is comprehensive; serving as an excellent database for comparative assessment of different countries with regard to various aspects associated with the oncology in these countries. However, we found slight discrepancy in the information provided by Parikh *et al.*,^[1] in regard to the official guidelines for cancer in India. In Table 2 of their article, for the question “does the country have official guidelines for cancer?” It is erroneously mentioned that India does not have official guidelines for any type of cancer.

Parikh *et al.*,^[1] have not recognized the conscientious efforts of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) which in its pioneer efforts of formulating national guidelines for cancer in India, issued national guidelines for the management of retinoblastoma, in 2010.^[2] The formulation of these guidelines was the result of collaborative efforts of ICMR along with pediatric hematology oncology (PHOCON 2008 pre congress) consultative meeting held on November 6, 2008, for discussion on guidelines and standard operating procedures for the management of retinoblastoma.^[3] In fact, from March 2009, ICMR has started a project called National Retinoblastoma Registry, the purpose of which is to reach every nook and corner of the country in an attempt to capture all cases of retinoblastoma in the country.^[4] Presently, there are 13 centers in this registry, which are required to manage retinoblastoma cases in accordance with the ICMR national guidelines. From time to time, these centers are required to submit the progress report as a mandatory protocol by ICMR, so that it can make sure that the guidelines are being stringently followed.

India still lacks as comprehensive guidelines as is present in United States. A nonprofit organization known as National Comprehensive Cancer Network has been formed in United States by the alliance of 25 cancer centers, most of which are

designated by the National Cancer Institute (one of the United States National Institutes of Health). The main activity of the organization is the development and publication of practice guidelines for oncology care, in an attempt to achieve its goal of improving the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of oncology care.^[5] These guidelines are developed by oncologists at the member cancer centers based on research evidence from clinical trials and other studies.^[5]

The development of national guidelines for management of retinoblastoma in India is like a foundation stone that enlightens a ray of hope that we will also have guidelines for various other cancers very soon. Finally, we would like to make a humble appeal to the concerned authorities including clinicians, researchers, oncologists, and all individuals dedicated to the effective treatment of cancer in India, to move ahead in this direction and formulate a comprehensive cancer network like the one or better than the one present in United States.

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