

Letter to Editor

Tell the truth, but be gentle

Dear Editor,

We read the articles “Does the cancer patient want to know? Results from a study in an Indian tertiary cancer center” and “The ethics of truth telling” with interest.^[1,2]

As the authors have pointed out, the role of doctors in the Indian subcontinent is one of great importance. They are a highly esteemed and revered group. Of course with changing times, like everyone else, doctors are being increasingly scrutinized. With commercialization of the medical profession, the traditional relationship between doctors and their patients is also being reviewed` from time to time.^[2,3]

In this era of the internet, usually the patients approach the doctors after the initial investigation itself with a lot of queries. Most of the time, the laboratory personnel are bombarded with queries regarding the diagnosis of malignancies and prognosis etc.^[4]

The reaction to the diagnosis of cancer can vary from person to person. Some may be fairly strong to accept the truth and carry on whereas, some simply collapse. In this study, the respondents already knew their diagnosis. As the authors have opined, a multi-institutional study with a greater sample size will help in better assessment of the attitude of patients.^[1]

We agree with Madhiwalla that innovative methods can be employed to meet the information needs of the patients.^[2]

We are of the opinion that nothing can substitute for a

sympathetic clinician who reveals the initial diagnosis, covers all relevant treatment aspects and explains the prognosis. A clinician who shares his/her valuable time and instills a glimmer of hope and a willingness to fight is what most patients long for.

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