

Origami in Oncology: Coping with Children

Common reactions and feeling of parents when a child is diagnosed with cancer are shock, disbelief, denial, fear, anxiety, guilt, sadness, depression, and anger.^[1] It takes a little while to get through the initial shock and come to terms with the circumstances. Apart from providing the care to their child, parents have to create a new “normal” for their child and themselves.^[2,3]

Cancer treatment in children is usually prolonged and requires frequent admissions. This leads to the separation and detachment of the children from their family, friends, and school. Everything is not only alien for them, but is painstakingly painful. Series of chemotherapies, multiple sittings of radiation therapy, and surgical procedures sap their enthusiasm, strength, and vitality. The children coming from villages are deprived of open courtyards, fields, etc., whereas those coming from an urban background are deprived of restaurants, malls, virtual games, etc. Their days pass waiting in the outpatient department, lying on the investigation machines’ couches, tourniquets being tightened around their delicate arms to withdraw blood for tests, or lying listlessly in the beds.

If only there was something that could engage the children to help them through this difficult phase. How about Origami! Origami is a Japanese art of folding paper and creating objects out of it.^[4] It is a science, an art, and even a profession! People have gone to the extent of patenting their creations and conferences are being conducted on Origami.^[5]

The little child within us was enthused by the thought of gifting Origami created by the women doctors of Pink City as a part of women’s days activities to the heroes (and heroines) fighting cancer. We did it [Figure 1]. It was heartening to see the cute bald moon like faces with chubby cheeks and starry eye looking at the Origami with such eagerness. Laughing as the paper frog jumped, his



Figure 1: Girl smiles as origami tiara adorns her

boat sailed on the hospital’s bed, smiling with pride as the floral paper tiara adorned her, hugging the fish, running after the rabbits and dangling colorful butterflies, flying the airplanes through I/V drip sets. The scene was touching!

The idea of making a three-dimensional object out of a flat sheet of paper in itself is a pleasure. No matter how small the creation is, when done with your own hands it gives a sense of achievement. When this small act of pleasure is shared with the kids who are facing the challenges of cancer and its treatment, it is multiplied. In fact, the smile on the faces of their attendants, who have not slept well since months wondering whether their baby will ever be the same again, touches ones heart as they fondly see their child toying with these small paper charms.

Longing to derive more pleasure, we thought of teaching these angels the art of Origami – the simpler ones to begin with. To our surprise, in next 2–3 sessions, we found many volunteers among the staff and attendants who were willing to take up origami to make children happy. So now, our pediatric ward has turned into a factory producing boats, cranes, frogs, airplanes, etc [Figure 2].

Origami has the following plus points when introduced to pediatric cancer patients:

- Safe as there is no chance of injury or trauma
- No infection as need not be shared, everyone may own an airplane!
- Inexpensive and interactive
- Self-creation leading to the sense of achievement which boosts up their low morale
- Innovative, so a new object everyday
- Easy to make
- Caregivers and staff may make or even older patients can make for the younger fellow patients, thereby learning to share and care
- Become the characters of the stories of these children
- May be made and used in the wards.

Smile of a child is infectious and so is his or her joy. If the child is happy, his parents are happy, the staff and doctors



Figure 2: Display of Origami in the pediatric ward

are happy. Happiness surely begets positivity which is more than welcome in the cancer treatment!

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Declaration of patient consent

The authors certify that they have obtained all appropriate patient consent forms. In the form the patient(s) has/have given his/her/their consent for his/her/their images and other clinical information to be reported in the journal. The patients understand that their names and initials will not be published and due efforts will be made to conceal their identity, but anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

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