



## Treatment of Childhood Cancer during COVID-19 Times

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The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) first reported in Wuhan, China in December 2019, has rapidly spread all over the world. As of today 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020, more than 6,474,559 persons have tested positive for the disease and 382,921 have succumbed to it. In India too 208,543 have tested positive and 5,834 persons have died due to COVID-19. Ludvigsson [1] systematically reviewed the literature and reported that children seemed to have a milder disease course, carried better prognosis than in adults, and deaths were extremely rare [2].

United Nations has stated that although children were not the face of this pandemic, but they were at risk being among its biggest victims [3]. Experts dealing with the treatment of cancer in children believe that the COVID-19 pandemic could pose a serious global challenge to the delivery of affordable and equitable treatment to children with cancer. A special report aimed at continuing multi-disciplinary care during the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic has been prepared so as to provide a framework for healthcare teams caring for children with cancer [3]. General guidelines have recommended the standards of care for the diagnosis, treatment and supportive care and that they should not be compromised or electively modified during the pandemic, if at all possible.

Dong, *et al.* [4] reporting on the epidemiological characteristics of paediatric patients, suggested that young children, particularly infants, were vulnerable to infection due to immaturity of the immune system. Most childhood cancers behave aggressively and need immediate treatment, often requiring prolonged periods of intensive multi-agent chemotherapy and this could make them susceptible to the infection. It is proposed that COVID-19 is going to remain for some time and will pose

further challenges in these children. Presently the efforts of the government are directed towards controlling COVID-19. Several measures have been taken including lockdown, ban on travel and closure of shops making it difficult for patients to seek treatment [5]. In days to come, availability of drugs and resources may become scarce. Nearly 50% of children undergoing chemotherapy are unable to travel at our centre, leading to disruption of therapy. Similarly, non-availability of radio-isotopes has led to delay in diagnosis and therapy.

COVID-19 has disrupted the world and will be the cause of widespread anxiety among families of children with cancer. The medical fraternity with active help from all agencies need to work out measures to reduce the difficulties faced by these children.

### Conflict of Interest

Declared None.

### References

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