



Message from Head of Operations



Dr Rajiv Pathni

Dear Readers,

Happy to publish the fourth issue of our newsletter and the first for our external stakeholders. In this issue we have shared an update on our cancer care work. Going forward, we will be presenting our quarterly newsletter.

The core idea of the programme is to make quality cancer care accessible and affordable to the last man of every village. As a team, we have started on a good note for the noble cause. Our team is consistently working towards enhancing healthcare systems by enabling quality treatment of cancer through evidence-based practices and state-of-the-art infrastructure.

With consistent guidance from the Hon'ble Minister of Health & Family Welfare Shri Himanta Biswa Sarma and the Trusts, construction of physical infrastructure is underway at ten different district headquarters. One of the best infrastructure construction companies of the country - Larsen & Toubro Limited is heading the construction works.

While setting up of the facilities is in process, we continue to reach out to masses through our awareness and screening programmes in different cities and through collaboration with National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) and National Health Mission (NHM). Our comprehensive community outreach programmes are being held at grassroots level in five different districts of Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Nagaon, Kamrup (rural) and Barpeta. For early detection of cancer, we have launched screening kiosks under the brand name 'Swasth Assam'. Palliative care units have been set up at Dibrugarh, Jorhat and Guwahati to provide dignified and quality of life to terminally ill patients.

It is our commitment to provide a sustainable cancer care solution, and we believe our determination and best practices will help build a healthier Assam.

Mission

To reduce the mortality and morbidity due to cancer through awareness, prevention, and early detection by taking care closer to people's homes



Infrastructure

The last quarter has been a phase of fast paced developments in the infrastructure of the project. In 2019 the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare had announced the first ten locations for hospital construction at Dibrugarh, Diphu, Barpeta, Silchar, Tezpur, Lakhimpur, Jorhat, Mangaldoi, Kokrajhar and upgradation of State Cancer Institute at Guwahati.

Of these ten locations, construction has gained momentum in Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Barpeta, Tezpur, Lakhimpur and Jorhat.



Foundation work in progress at Barpeta Site

In Diphu, the decision to convert the existing civil hospital into an L2 facility has been finalized and work is expected to begin soon. While in Mangaldoi and Kokrajhar, the land is being handed over to ACCF and site enabling work is in progress, in Silchar land identification is in process.

Day-care centres

Considering the response and inflow of patients, ACCF has proposed to open day-care centres in different locations. These are additional facilities to cater to the immediate needs of the people.

To begin with – a thirty-bedded facility is being developed at the existing oncology ward of Assam Medical College & Hospital at Dibrugarh along with upgrading the linear accelerator bunker; and in Diphu Civil Hospital, the OPD section is being converted into a twelve-bedded facility.

Grants

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL) has signed an MoU with Tata Trusts for providing grants towards ACCF project for development of affordable cancer care for the population in Darrang district. These funds will be utilised towards construction of the cancer care facility in Mangaldoi, and to create cancer awareness across the district.

As a part of their CSR activities, Numaligarh Refinery Ltd. (NRL) has signed an MoU with ACCF. Aligned with their focus area of upliftment of community health, NRL grants will be utilised to equip the upcoming radiotherapy block in the cancer care facility at Barpeta.



Nayan Khound
Lead – Projects & Operations

Raising awareness through community outreach

In 2016, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) reported 31,825 new cancer cases in Assam - though the actual numbers are believed to be double of it. Of this, 70% of the cases were reported at late stages which resulted in a high mortality rate of almost 50%. The delayed diagnosis is attributed to lack of awareness of cancer symptoms, poor access to affordable care and other psychological factors like fear and fatalism.

ACCF has been actively organising community outreach programmes in remote areas especially, those having lesser access to healthcare facilities. To create awareness about screening of Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and to penetrate into secluded locations, we are collaborating with local organisations.

We have collaborated with Directorate of Medical Education (DME), and National Health Mission (NHM), to extend support to State and District NCD Cells in planning and implementation of 'Universal screening and control of five common NCDs.' A mobile team of dentists, nurses, health camp managers and data entry operators are working with Community Health Officers (CHOs) and Multipurpose workers (MPWs) (females) for cancer screening at their respective Health and Wellness Centres. To change the ratio of early to late diagnosis of cancer from 30:70 to 70:30, awareness and screening camps are being organised across the state for oral, breast and cervical cancers.



'Continuum of Care' is being ensured by strengthening follow-up mechanism for cancer suspected cases. One Patient Navigator (PN) has been placed in Medical College Hospital at Jorhat, Barpeta, Kamrup (Rural), Jorhat, and Nagaon.

We have been engaged with health care providers to utilise their services. By end of 2019, the outreach team had built capacity of approximately 302 MPWs (F&M), 92 CHOs, and 27 Staff Nurses by handholding and supporting them for cancer screening. With their support, 26,092 people were screened and eighteen confirmed cases of cancer were detected until December 2019.

There are twenty-one **Amalgamated Plantations Pvt. Ltd. (APPL)** tea gardens in Assam with a total population of 85845. APPL and ACCF collaborated for screening and treatment facilitation services for residents of tea gardens.

As per available documentation, health seeking behaviour of residents of tea gardens has been found to be poor. The residents are also susceptible to a number of hazards in their workplace due to physical, biological, mechanical, chemical and psychosocial factors. Annual screening for NCDs will keep their health under check. So far since the starting of the initiative in November 2019, 1531 people have been screened for common NCDs in Chubwa Tea Garden.



Swasth Assam kiosk was initiated to enhance the coverage of screening programmes through opportunistic screening. In collaboration with different Medical College Hospitals of Assam through Directorate of Medical Education, Health Screening & Awareness Kiosks are being set up with the objective of targeting relatives of IPD and OPD patients. The first Health Kiosk was opened in collaboration with Guwahati Medical College & Hospital. In the first week of inauguration, a total of 275 people have been screened.



Prospective

To expand the reach for community level services, ACCF is planning to extend support to three districts - Darrang, and Karbi Anlong, and Silchar from February 2020 and to Kokrajhar and Lakhimpur from next financial year.

ACCF plans to operationalize two more Swasth Assam kiosks in Barpeta and Tezpur in collaboration with Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Medical College Hospital and Tezpur Medical College Hospital respectively by first week of February 2020 and another two health kiosks in Dibrugarh and Silchar Medical Colleges in the last week of February 2020.



Kumar Gaurav
State Liaison Officer

Focus

Palliative Care Unit – Dibrugarh

Assam is facing a dearth of apposite palliative care and hospices mostly due to lack of awareness about such type of care. The present palliative and hospice centres are insufficient compared to the huge need.

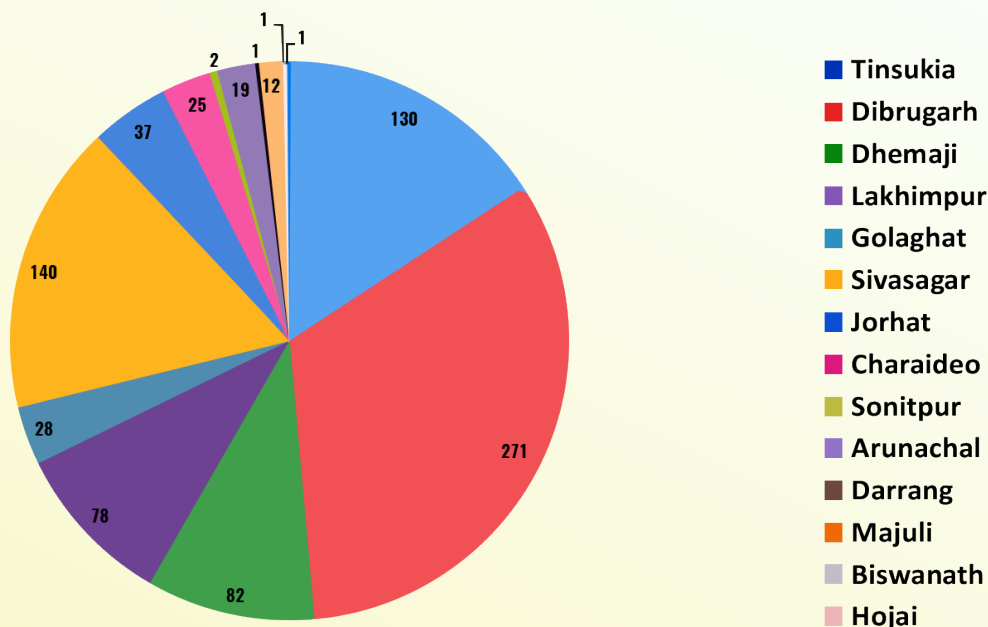
To address the issue, ACCF initiated to provide palliative care in Assam. The first Palliative Care Unit became operational on November 22, 2018 at OPD of Assam Medical College and Hospital, Dibrugarh and was led by one doctor and four nurses.

Since then, the centre has successfully provided palliative care through more than 2300 consultations and 845 new patients referred from various departments of AMCH. The unit has catered to the needs of not only people from nearby areas but, from far flung areas like Darrang - which is at a distance of over 400 kilometres from Dibrugarh and even from neighbouring states like Arunachal Pradesh. Besides OPD, the unit also extends its services to inpatients with cancer in various departments.



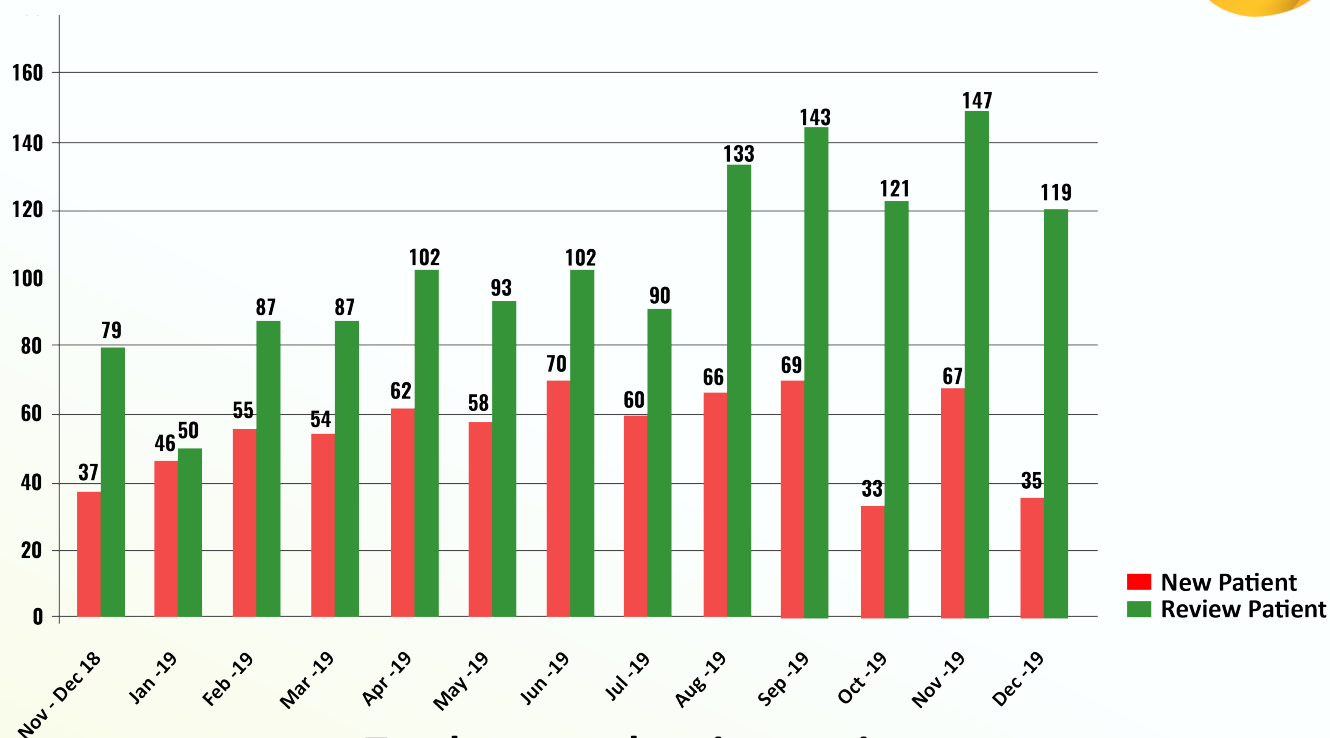
Bonding between health care providers and patients

Number of patients



827 Total new patients
District-wise new patients flow

Patients visiting from far off areas to avail palliative care services at PCU - Dibrugarh



Total new and review patients

The steadily increasing number of review patients reveals the high level of patient satisfaction

Creating Awareness

In an endeavour to spread awareness on palliative care, the unit has integrated with B.Sc. Nursing College and GNM Nursing College. The 3rd year nursing students from these colleges are regularly posted in the unit for clinical exposure. Theory classes are also being organised on palliative care topics for them.



Meditation Session regularly held at PCU - Dibrugarh



Fitness Session

Making a Difference...

“I and my father cannot share the same room with my mother. Eating food with her is also not possible due to bad smell coming from her” – Mina’s Son

Mina (name changed) had soft tissue sarcoma on her right thigh. She suffered from a malodorous huge crater on her thigh, that was filled with dead tissue and slough accompanied with severe pain.

Stigmatised, Mina would keep herself aloof from her family and society, and would cover herself with heavy layers of clothing. This issue over-shadowed her physical symptoms and deprived her from getting apt treatment.

Mina’s ordeal was a challenge to us. However, reaching out and holding someone’s hand was never impossible. Mina began to trust us and her journey towards healing started. With regular dressings, sloughs removed, and oral morphine administered, she was clear of the malodour in a week’s time.

Regaining her self-esteem, Mina and her family could see a ray of hope. After completing her treatment, Mina went back home with an almost healed wound, staying in the same room and eating together with her family. She regularly visits the unit for dressing and check-up however, malodour was never an issue anymore.

To see Mina and her family happy and satisfied, is a bliss for us as caretakers. We are happy to make a difference to the lives of many such patients and their attendants.



Dr Tanma Mahanta
Palliative Care

Glimpses from the Past



Partnership initiation between The Government of Assam and Tata Trusts.



Bhumi Pujan performed for building cancer care facilities in Assam in June 2018



Palliative Care Units at Assam Medical College and Hospital - Dibrugarh, Jorhat Medical College and Hospital - Jorhat and State Cancer Institute – Guwahati



ACCF at Sankar Sangha Festival – Morigaon, 2019



Walkathon on Cancer Awareness organised by ACCF on the occasion of second establishment day of State Cancer Institute



ACCF Nurses training - Assisting surgeon in axillary radical mastectomy

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