

Message



Dr Sanjiv Chopra

Chief Executive
Alamelu Charitable
Foundation

Dear Readers,

This edition of the newsletter is a reminiscence of our accomplishments through the year 2020. We are committed to deliver on our commitment for providing quality cancer care and as I write, it gives me immense pleasure to share our new milestones - whilst battling COVID19. Progress is evident and we have been successful in establishing our niche in the health sector. This has been possible with strong leadership team and a dynamic squad.

Team HR has been pivotal in bringing together the various departments of the organisation on the same platform. They ensured coordination between departments for smooth flow of work during the transition to work from home culture. Practicing all precautionary measures and following government instructions, the infra and operations team has demonstrated that no challenge is bigger than commitment. While development of hospitals at ten locations across the state are underway, the team - defying all odds - has completed projects for preliminary services during this period. Two Chemotherapy Day Care Centres with state-of-the-art infrastructure at Dibrugarh and Diphu; five wellness kiosks aimed at opportunistic screening of common NCDs at Guwahati, Barpeta, Tezpur, Dibrugarh and Diphu are operational - ensuring easy access to cancer care. Our frontline staff - the medical team and the outreach team has gone beyond the call of duty during the pandemic. The doctors and nurses

at the Day Care Centres and Palliative Care Units were on duty even during the toughest days. They ensured no patient had to return without being treated. The lockdown season may have paralyzed the nation. However, the hapless patients were never forgotten. ACCF's outreach team penetrated to remote locations across the state, set up health camps, and reached out to the underserved masses - creating cancer awareness, breaking their myth about cancer and convincing for getting themselves screened for common NCDs. There have been many instances where a patient is deprived of treatment due to financial constraints. Our Patient Navigators have identified such ailing cancer patients in far-flung areas and prepared the ground for immediate and hassle-free treatment. They were treated free-of-cost under existing Government schemes.

We are a step closer towards the noble cause and we hope to write many more success stories in the future. As we gear up for the upcoming hospitals across the state, we aim to bring cancer care closer home - making treatment accessible and affordable for all. Please stay safe, practice hygiene, and remember the pandemic is an opportunity for all of us to bounce back.

Best wishes!

What's Inside



Focus

A Heartfelt Note

"I am happy and grateful to the Palliative Care team for treating me and reducing my pain. I am not dependent on others anymore to do my daily chores. I salute the team"

– Bhushan Lal, 50 years, Doom Dooma

A doctor's happiness is a patient's sense of wellbeing which includes feeling happy, healthy, socially connected, and purposeful. Such was the delight amongst the Palliative Care team at Dibrugarh when *Bhushan Lal visited the unit for the second time on September 18, 2020.

Bhushan Lal - a patient aged 50 years from Doomdoooma in Tinsukia district visited ACCF's Palliative Care Unit (PCU) at AMCH for the first time in the month of May 2020. He was accompanied by his relatives and was in extreme distress, to the extent that he was neither able to move nor narrate his ordeal. The relatives stated that he had not been able to sleep for many nights. He was suffering from Cancer of Nasopharynx in advance stage and had been taking Radiation Therapy.



The palliative team prepared a treatment plan comprising of pain management, nutritional support, anxiety management and counselling of relatives. He was issued medication which his relatives collected for him for next few weeks.

On the morning of September 18, a bright-eyed man walked into the unit with a happy and smiling face while managing his backpack and yes, it was Bhushan Lal! His transformation was evident from his appearance.

This time he travelled alone from his home – which is about 80 Kms to the PCU. He expressed his happiness for the recovery so far and we, as a medical team feel blessed.



*Bhushan Lal – name changed



Dr Tanma Mahanta
Palliative Care

Enduring Narratives

A Positive Beginning

"I could not have asked for more!

When I learnt about my cancer, my world came crashing down. I saw a ray of hope only after meeting ACCF's healthcare worker" - Somrai Dungdung, 40 years, Karbi Anglong

It was almost three years ago when Somrai noticed an ulcerous growth on his inner lower lip, which gradually started expanding on the outside and became visible. He, along with his family visited a hospital in Dimapur where he was diagnosed with early stage Verrucous Carcinoma. Surgery was suggested as the first line of treatment. But Somrai could not afford to go under the knife due to financial limitations. He took local medicines, but in vain. Somrai hardly showed any improvement.

In the last week of October 2020 - ACCF's Patient Navigator at Diphu learnt about Somrai's health condition during his field visit. He immediately met Somrai and suggested him to visit the hospital. He was reluctant initially; however, he and his family were convinced of a free of cost surgery, and that expenses would be covered under Government Schemes. He was examined and reviewed by Medical Oncologist at ACCF Onco Care, Diphu (newly launched day care centre) - who prepared a treatment plan, including his transfer to State Cancer Institute (SCI) at Guwahati for surgery. Thereafter, he would come back for chemotherapy and follow up at the day care unit in Diphu. He was assisted by Outreach Team leader at Diphu to get enrolled into Aatal

Amrit Abhiyan (AAA) scheme and issued him a AAA card. This gave him assurance that he would not require to fund for himself.

Information was instantaneously shared with ACCF's Doctor and Patient Navigator at SCI, who coordinated with various departments for a seamless course of treatment. On November 16, 2020, Somrai was ferried in ACCF vehicle accompanied by a Patient Navigator. He was admitted at SCI and an immediate surgery was advised. He needed blood transfusion which was arranged by ACCF team members. A team of Oncologists planned the process and after preliminary tests and procedures, Somrai had undergone a successful surgery on November 23. He was finally discharged from hospital on December 2. Our ACCF team continues with his follow up for further course.

Somrai's case exemplifies the relentless efforts of Team ACCF and their commitment towards making cancer care accessible to one and all. His treatment began within a short span of time since the first referral. What is most convincing is the trust laid upon us. As we continue our journey, we believe we will be able to bring smiles on many such ailing patients and those deprived of quality treatment.



Early Detection is the Best Protection

My knowledge on symptoms of breast cancer, early detection and timely medical intervention saved my life. I am thankful to the health workers of ACCF for creating cancer awareness

– Dipanjali Borah, 29 years, Guwahati

Dipanjali was posted at ACCF's wellness kiosk at Guwahati Medical College (GMCH) as housekeeping staff. During this time, she learnt about different cancers and their symptoms, which eventually helped her in detecting her breast cancer at an early stage. When she discovered a lump in her breast, she immediately informed staff nurse at the kiosk. Clinical breast examination was performed on her in February 2020 and a lump was detected in her right breast. She underwent a surgery on July 10, and the sample was sent for biopsy. Deepanjali was diagnosed with carcinoma cancer in the

right breast and was referred to State Cancer Institute, where she underwent a surgery for the second time. The sample was sent for further investigation and after reviewing reports, Medical Oncologist from SCI planned for eight cycles of chemotherapy and one radiation each month for the next two years.

Dipanjali's cancer was detected at an early stage, and hence she received her treatment on time. We hope she lives a cancer-free life and emerges a survivor – setting an example of 'early detection is the best protection.'



Infrastructure

Jorhat model - an impression



Conceptual picture of the upcoming facility*

ACCF's Jorhat cancer care centre will be a Level 3 (L3) facility with a built-up area of 89,772 square feet. Located adjacent to Jorhat Medical College and Hospital (JMCH), the facility will have two

buildings – a G+3 Hospital housing beds with state-of-the-art operation theatres, critical care units, fully equipped diagnostic services and a G+1 Radiotherapy block.

Hospital Block

- » Completed Works – Excavation, Stone Columns, Raft RCC, PCC, Retaining Wall, IPD, Base Isolator Installation
- » Under Progress - Staging work for Grade Slab

Radiotherapy Block

- » Completed Works - Excavation, Stone Columns, Structure of Bunker 1, Bunker 2 and Brachy completed
- » Under Progress - Non-Bunker Columns and Plinth Beam

Ramp / STP

- » Completed Works - Excavation, Stone Columns, Raft for STP
- » Under Progress - Raft for Ramp, STP wall making ready for RCC

1. Using local natural resource to overcome nature's challenges

We are happy to present the positioning of this significantly progressing project which kicked off in mid-December 2019, whilst conquering nature's hurdles and generic obstructions with timely and strategic interventions. Water logging at the site is a persistent issue caused by perennial rains and overflow of storm drain water from hospital and neighbouring villages. The matter was discussed with stakeholders and considering all feasibilities, the issue was resolved with unique solution i.e. bamboo shoring.

Glimpses



Water logging at site



Bamboo Shoring



Making of alternate access for workforce movement



Hospital Block

2. The show must go on...

Another fear factor - COVID19, which has the whole world in its grip had also began to affect the construction work. Since beginning of the pandemic, the COVID19 screening centre was set up at the entrance of project site. This caused a great deal of hindrance as a few staff and labourers had been infected. In the interim, many labourers had also migrated. To keep the work going, we harnessed maximum local workforce, and created alternate access for their movement to avoid any direct contact with COVID cases near screening centre. Amidst these circumstances, construction has been unhindered, rapid and successful.



STP and Non-Bunker Area



Radiotherapy Block



Ramp Raft



Jyoti Ranjan Nayak
Projects (Civil)

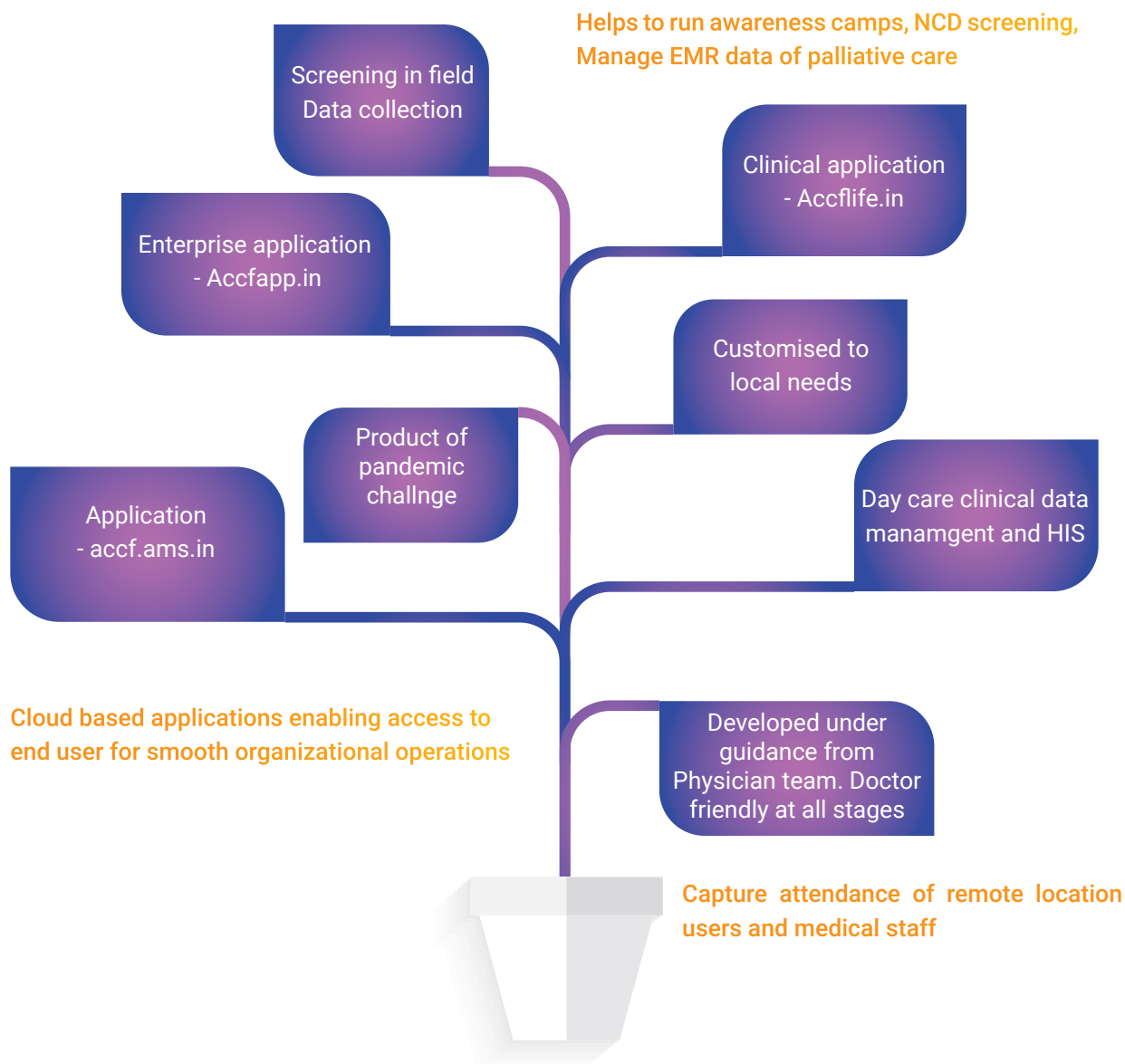
Unleashing the Information Technology Element

ACCF Life – a story of innovation

“You are bigger than your circumstances or life situation.” ~ Pam Morris

Driven by the passion to deliver a seamless experience for our stakeholders, we keep exploring newer magnitudes. IT-enabled processes and applications are the force multipliers bringing in efficiency as well as transparency. It is necessary to organize and maintain a digitized data warehouse for the various activities

that are being carried out within the organization – right from employee onboarding to assigning job. Wading through the many challenges of coding for a complex structure to deployment, ACCF IT team has been able to deliver a range of user-friendly applications within a short span of time.



These applications have helped in strengthening the operations of the organization at different levels – from tracking activities and consolidating data of Outreach Team across Assam to organizing online training and office management. ACCF Life is a locally developed product and has been serving the operational purpose in a big way. As the hospitals get operational it will be easy to migrate to the final Hospital Information System (HIS) using this platform.

Since the successful implementation, it was decided

to replicate ACCF's Enterprise Application for Alamelu Charitable Foundation (ACF). Processes began, however, this time challenges were bigger considering the magnitude of operations at ACF and the pandemic environment. The process involved creation of separate instance and deploying in cloud, configuring modules as required by ACF. Access to resources were limited as most of the people were working from home. However, the team superseded these challenges with much vigour and successfully implemented the applications within the notified time.

Then came the requirement from the doctors in Palliative Therapy vertical. We took that challenge and created a functional application for patient care records - customized to the requirement of palliative medicine in the area of pain management and other modalities of providing comfort.

Outreach programme (screening) application - Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading cause of adult mortality and morbidity. Keeping in view that there are common preventable risk factors for Cancer and Diabetes, we have developed and deployed this application to capture patients' demographic details, early diagnosis of diabetes, hypertension, breast cancer, oral cancer and cervical cancer. Patients' details of these diseases are captured district wise

and the suspected patients are followed up by Patient Navigator for further treatment. District and disease-wise analytics reports can be downloaded. Feedback of Kiosk patients are also captured in both English and Assamese languages.

Day-care application - This application is developed to keep track of patients, their treatment processes, and treatment cycles. It also facilitates to get online appointments by dialling our toll-free number. The application is developed with the purpose of digitally storing all the patient information, their health progress along with their test reports and this can be achieved with a few clicks. Each patient will have a unique patient ID that will be valid during his / her entire lifetime. Analytics reports can also be downloaded.



Samiran das
Lead - IT

Raising Awareness Through Community Outreach

Cancer Awareness and Tobacco Control Programmes

"This is a very good platform for acquiring knowledge about cancer and for sharing knowledge in the society and among students' community, which will bring awareness about the disease and help all to lead healthy life. I salute the resource doctors"

~ Sharmila Choudhury - Teacher, Barpeta

The Community Outreach Team of Assam Cancer Care Foundation has been working with multiple stakeholders to sensitize and create awareness on adverse effects of tobacco abuse. Presently ACCF team is deputed in eight districts of Assam - Darrang,

Barpeta, Kamrup Rural, Jorhat, Nagaon, Dibrugarh, Karbi Anglong and Cachar. The programme is led by District Health Managers of ACCF along with the respective District Tobacco Control Cells.

Amidst restricted physical mobility in communities in the past few months owing to the pandemic, there were opportunities too. With the State Tobacco Control Cell (STCC) - Assam, ACCF promptly switched gears to organise online training and sensitisation activities, and with a revised approach to include the impact of COVID19 on tobacco users. ACCF provided the technical support to STCC ensuring coordination among the partner organisations and beneficiaries.

Tobacco abuse is a huge burden in Assam. According to GATS 2017, 48.2% people of the total population in the age group of 15 years and above consume some form of tobacco. In addition to the smoked forms that include cigarettes, bidis and cigars - a plethora of smokeless forms of consumption exist in India. 90% of oral cancers are due to chewing habits including areca nut and smoking. In the recent times it was reported that increase in unemployment rates and lack of social mobility owing to COVID19 pandemic increased stress and anxiety levels due to which many people, especially the youth were resorting to smoking. Hence, use of various means of communication on tobacco control became paramount to create awareness amongst the community influencers and youth. As the lockdown restrictions eased, the ACCF team conducted several training programmes physically in different blocks, villages and tea gardens. Public Spitting was prohibited



as per the Disaster Management Act to mitigate the spread of the virus and hence sensitisation programmes against public spitting, along with importance of quitting smokeless tobacco was conducted amongst the students of National Service Scheme in various colleges across Assam.

In the last three months, ACCF conducted over forty-nine virtual and physical trainings engaging over 2200 beneficiaries. We have re-established and strengthened our partnerships with the Department of Education, Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission, Media, among others. We will focus on conducting more robust tobacco control programmes in the rural communities by involving community-based organisations and youth groups, along with media engagements.



Dr Subrata Chanda
Cancer Care Programme

**Early Detection
is the
Best Protection**



**For Cancer related query call toll free
number 18003454325**



Breast Cancer Awareness: A lot more to achieve

Cancer is one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide. With an estimated 14.1 million new cases and 8.2 million deaths annually, more than 20 million new cases of cancer are predicted worldwide in 2025 - with four-fifths of the burden falling on low and middle-income countries. The burden of cancer cases for India in the year 2020 is calculated to be approximately 11 lakhs compared to 979,786 in 2010 (ICMR 2020). Cancers of oral cavity and lungs in male, and breast and cervical cancers in females account for more than 50% of all cancer deaths in India. In 2012 16.7 lakh new cases of breast cancer were detected, which is 25.16% of all new cases of female cancer patients. As per International agency for research on

cancer - WHO, number of new cases of breast cancer increased from 22.21% in 2008 to 27% in 2012.

Between 30–50% of cancers can currently be prevented by avoiding risk factors and implementing existing evidence-based prevention strategies. Risk factors involve reproductive (e.g. age at the birth of first child and number of children), anthropometric (e.g. adiposity) and lifestyle factors (e.g. tobacco smoking and alcohol use). The cancer burden can also be reduced through early detection of cancer and management of patients who develop cancer. Many cancers have a high chance of cure if diagnosed early and treated adequately.

Is it in the right direction?

As per the National Cancer Registry Report 2020, breast cancer being the most common type of cancer in women, accounts for 14% of cancers in Indian women. It is reported that every four minutes an Indian woman is diagnosed with breast cancer. It is on the rise, both in rural and urban India. Cancer survival becomes more difficult in higher stages of its growth, and more than 50% of Indian women suffer from stage 3 and 4 of breast cancer.

Women can self-diagnose their condition and know of the presence of lumps or masses that suggest cancerous outgrowths. The very reason for a low breast cancer survival rate of women in India accounts from its lack of awareness and poor early screening and diagnosis rates. As per NFHS-4, women of 15-49 years of age who have undergone screening for breast cancer

amounts to only 9.8%, which is quite less.

The survival rate of breast cancer in India is low because of late detection. The only way to change these numbers is by increasing awareness. Breast cancer is a treatable disease and chances of survival are higher if it is detected on time. The only way to do so is by being aware of how it can be detected, so that early diagnosis can be done. This includes leading a healthy lifestyle, being aware of family medical histories – so that if you know you are genetically inclined towards it, you can take preventive drugs or undergo preventive surgery. The simplest way to breast cancer prevention is by being able to do a self-breast examination. Women of thirty years and above should be doing this on a regular basis. Prevention is a step away from cure. Be aware, be prepared.

The way forward

Understanding the drivers and barriers is important for strategic and effective awareness campaigns and interventions on prevention and early detection of breast cancer. Indian women need to be aware of both modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors for breast cancer to adopt appropriate practices for prevention. With wide variations in the state-level burden, a coordinated intensive health promotion

intervention programme on risk factors, prevention, screening, and management for breast cancer is prudent. Training on the latest evidence regarding breast cancer risk factors should be offered to healthcare providers and community workers to raise their cancer literacy, so that they can then communicate this knowledge to other sections of the society.



Dr Sanghamitra Bora
Palliative Care

- » GLOBOCAN 2012: International Agency for Research on Cancer, WHO
- » ICMR 2020: The National cancer Registry Programme Report, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Gov.
- » ICMR: National Cancer Registry Programme, 2020, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Gov.
- » NFHS-4: Indian Institute of Population Sciences, India, Gov.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month – October 2020



Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Principal AMCH releasing the floating banner. Balloons fly as symbol of hope!



Radiation Oncologist interacting on Breast cancer education



Breast Cancer Awareness Month observed by ACCF Team at State Cancer Institute, Guwahati



Prize distribution of Health Awareness Quiz Competition for nurses

Exclusive Feature

Expressive Art Therapy

ACCF's Palliative Care Unit of State Cancer Institute (SCI) – Guwahati, frequently organizes Expressive Art Therapy for patients and their care givers. Conducted by our Social Worker cum Counsellor, the sessions provide a platform to visually express inner thoughts and worries. Our patient Rina Nath shared her experience with us – “I feel very relaxed and happy after attending the session. I forgot my pain and problems for a few moments. Thank you for your support and care. I would love to join in for more such sessions in future”. Another patient named Ayushman Neog Dey says – “I feel very happy today. This kind of activities and meditation are one of the most powerful keys for our treatment. I feel very grateful to have attended this programme”.

Expressive Art Therapy is a multimodal approach towards emotional and mental wellbeing of a person. The therapy can be part of the treatment strategy for a wide variety of illness as well as behavioural, emotional, and mental health conditions like anxiety, depression

and chronic medical illness like cancer. Studies show that Art Therapy is a great way to help cancer patients and their care givers to deal with their feelings including reducing depressive symptoms and physical pain, while enhancing their quality of life. Patients can choose from a range of art forms depending upon their interest and comfort - where a few might prefer listening to music, while others may like drawing, painting, sculpting, or writing.

Although not many patients get the opportunity to attend such sessions under the guidance of a professional art therapist however, it is easy to practice by self and benefit from it. Art therapy has the potential to be a powerful tool for helping people to live and deal with cancer - both physically and psychologically. The primary goal of the therapy is to divulge the feelings of a cancer patient and help them be happy; as in the words of psychoanalyst Jung “Happy state is the creative state”.



Dr Dipankar Dakua
Palliative Care

Snippets

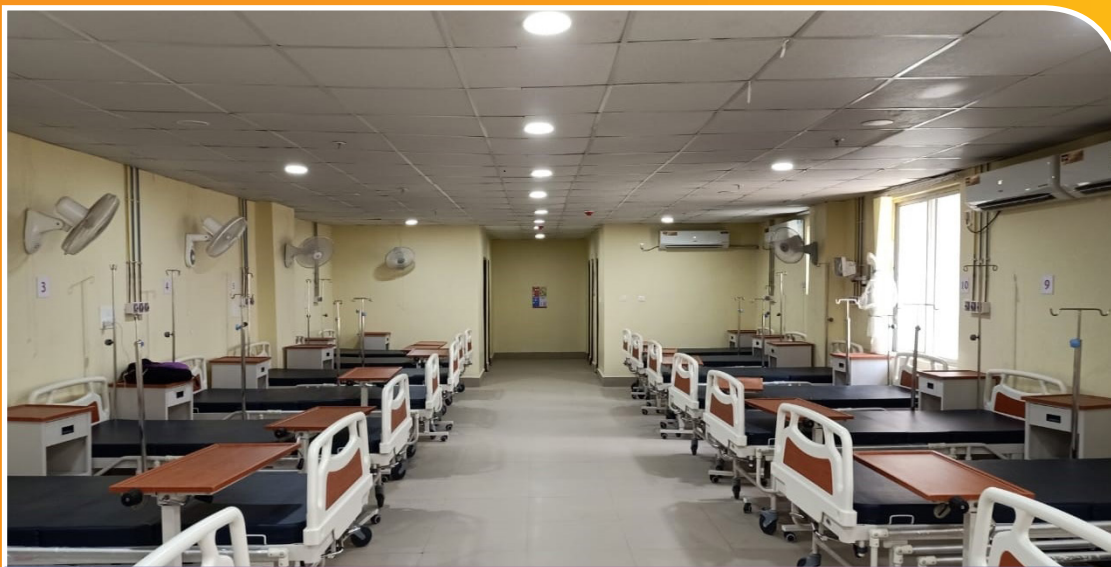


Swasth Assam, Barpeta – Health checkup in process



ACCF Onco Care, Diphu – Consultation by Medical Oncologist

Snippets



ACCF Onco Care, Diphu – The newly developed Day Care Centre with modern infrastructure



ACCF Onco Care, Dibrugarh – Consultation at the Day Care Centre by Medical oncologist

Snippets

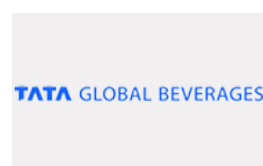


ACCF Onco Care, Dibrugarh – Patients undergoing Chemotherapy sessions at the Day Care Centre



ACCF Onco Care, Dibrugarh – World Class LINAC ready for Commissioning

Our Partners



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For Cancer related query call toll free number **18003454325**