

ISNOCON 2019 - a forum for multi-disciplinary collaboration

The 11th Annual Conference of the Indian Society of Neuro-Oncology in Bhopal, India from 5th to 7th April 2019

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Namaskar*

Brain tumors represent less than 1-2% of all the newly diagnosed cancers in India. Though this represents a small figure, it is a catastrophic illness which brings with it a sense of insecurity and despair for the patient and the family. In a survey of brain tumor-affected patients, the two most important things that patients want post treatment are to retain the brain function and to maintain their ability to walk and perform basic physical tasks of daily living independently. The fear of disability following surgery and radiotherapy is one of the main reasons of delayed treatment resulting in poor outcomes.

The 11th Annual Conference of the Indian Society of Neuro-Oncology (ISNOCON) was held in Bhopal, India from 4th to 7th April 2019 at Hotel Jehan Numa Palace, a heritage venue. This was the first time it was held in a "Tier-2" city (Indian cities are classified into tiers in terms of real estate, business and commercialisation) in a non-institutional set up. The meeting saw the highest attendance in the history of ISNOCON since its inception.

Three hundred and fifty delegates from various specialities such as neurosurgery, radiation, medical and pediatric oncology, neuropathology, neuroradiology, psychology and molecular biologists/scientists participated with 13 international faculty from Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Germany and South Korea. National faculty from all of the major Indian institutions like AIIMS, New Delhi; Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai; PGI,



Dr Nitin Garg, Organising Secretary, ISNOCON 2019

Chandigarh; SGPGI, Lucknow; NIMHANS, Bangalore; CMC, Vellore; KEM, Mumbai and private hospitals such as Medanta Hospital (Gurgaon), Fortis, Artemis Hospital

(Gurgaon), Yashoda Hospital, Bombay Hospital and Apollo Proton Centre (Chennai) participated in this event.

Three workshops in neurosurgery, radiation oncology and molecular neuro-oncology were held as part of a pre-conference activity on 4th April.

In the neurosurgical workshop, techniques to demonstrate resection of eloquent cortex gliomas using intra-operative neuro-monitoring (IONM) were held with two live surgeries.

In the radiotherapy contouring workshop, students were trained on treatment planning stations (TPS) about effective contouring in various tumors, such as gliomas, metastases, pituitary adenomas and meningiomas.

Lastly, the molecular neuro-oncology workshop gave hands-on training to participants for immuno-flourescent cytochemical detection of tumor markers by



For the first time at ISNOCON there was a whole session on psycho-oncology which was attended by brain tumor patients and their families



IBTA Chair and Co-Director Kathy Oliver delivering a keynote lecture on 'The Impact of Patient Advocacy Groups on Global Neuro-Oncology' at ISNOCON 2019

liquid cytology (IF-ICC), dot immuno-binding assay (DIA) for detection of proteomic markers from blood and flow cytometry for detection of brain tumor stem cells.

All three workshops were well attended.

The theme of this year's conference was sellar and suprasellar tumors with special emphasis on pituitary adenomas and craniopharyngiomas. Various surgical and radiotherapy techniques and long term results in these tumors were discussed. Importantly, dedicated talks by eminent endocrinologists Dr Nalini Shah and Dr Anurag Lila emphasised the long term endocrinological outcomes and methods to treat and correct these.

An entire session at ISNOCON was devoted to intracranial germ cell tumors. A framework for consensus guidelines for management of these tumors was formulated. These will be published in due course.

Professor Eric Bouffet (The hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, Canada) delivered the Ab Guha Oration in memory of Prof Abhijit Guha, a greatly admired and respected neurosurgeon who was born in Kolkata but who lived in Canada and practised neurosurgery at the University of Toronto. Dr Guha passed away in 2011, age 54, from acute myeloblastic leukemia. In his oration, Prof Bouffet emphasised the limitations in providing optimal and timely treatment for pediatric brain tumor patients in developing countries.

ISNO President, Dr Suresh Sankhla, in his presidential address highlighted the advances of endoscopic surgery for sellar and suprasellar tumors.

A keynote lecture was delivered by Prof Yong-Kil Hong, President of WFNOS, on oncolytic virus therapy in gliomas. This seems an exciting option with promising results in the preliminary clinical trials.

Dr Vinay Puduvalli and Dr Ching Lau from the United States, Dr Marcel Kool from Germany, Dr Seok-Gu Kang from South Korea and Ms Kathy Oliver from the International Brain Tumour Alliance (IBTA) delivered the other keynote lectures. Ms Kathy Oliver highlighted the importance of brain tumor support groups in providing better aftercare, raising funds for research and spreading awareness about the challenges of brain tumors.

Neuro-oncologists have traditionally focussed on improving therapeutic strategies for brain tumor patients. However, psycho-social needs of the patients and their caregivers must also be addressed in a more structured manner. Hence, the 11th ISNOCON had an entire psycho-oncology session dedicated to this purpose. Patient support groups, such as the Brain Tumor Foundation of India (BTF) and the International Brain Tumour Alliance (IBTA) actively participated in this session to deliberate and guide on this important but neglected issue.

Dr Soumitra Dutta, pediatric psychiatrist from the Tata Medical Centre, Kolkata,



Dr Savita Goswami, a psycho-oncologist from the Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai moderated the session with brain tumour patients, caregivers and families at ISNOCON 2019.

presented a road map on how to set up pediatric psycho-oncology services in routine clinical practice. Dr Prakash Chitalkar, a medical oncologist and advocate of support groups discussed the issues faced by teenagers and young adults (TYA) with various malignancies including brain tumors.

Dr Savita Goswami, a psycho-oncologist from Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai, conducted two panel discussions - one involving patients and their caregivers and the other involving psychiatrists, psychologists, patient support group advocates and clinicians. About 20 patients, some of whom are still undergoing treatment for their brain tumors, were present with their families in these interactive sessions. Some of them were highly-qualified professionals, such as an architect, interior designer, banker, managerial executive and a practising doctor. Important issues highlighted in this session were as follows:

1. The importance of a multi-disciplinary team for appropriate and prompt diagnosis and post-operative management. Some tumors may have unusual presentations, such as hormonal imbalances, visual impairment or metabolic syndromes. A multi-disciplinary team helps in arriving at a prompt diagnosis. ➤



Dr R K Panday (left), Organising Chairman of ISNOCON 2019 and Dr Tejpal Gupta, General Secretary of ISNO



Radiation Oncologist Dr Rakesh Jalali, ISNO Advisory Council member

2. Effective communication. This was stressed unanimously. There is a fear of the unknown in the minds of brain tumor patients and their caregivers. Effective communication regarding the disease, treatment related aspects, long term survivorship issues and quality of life allays anxiety and prepares them better to undertake treatment. The Brain Tumor Foundation of India has been working relentlessly in achieving this goal of easier communication and publishes brain tumor booklets in nine Indian languages including English. These booklets give information on various aspects of brain tumors such as diagnosis, treatment, follow-up, prognosis, various clinical trials and links to websites on brain tumors.

3. Apprehension regarding tumor recurrence. Anyone who has successfully completed treatment fears a recurrence. Tumor support groups can help to allay these fears to an extent.

4. Social Integration. There is limited access to information about brain tumors in society. Anyone who has successfully conquered the treatment path may still find it difficult to get back to their routine profession. "Will he/she be competent enough?"; "Are they more prone to errors?"; "Will they be able to expend the effort?". These are just some of the questions in the minds of employers and colleagues. Some of the brain tumor

patients at ISNOCON 2019 shared that work-place support in terms of job security, financial assistance, and understanding colleagues are very important in reducing their stress levels. Support groups need to work on better sensitisation and awareness amongst the policy makers and society to address these aspects more humanely and without ambiguity.

5. Narrative medicine. "Providing a platform to express patients' and caregivers' pent-up feelings has a positive impact and significantly reduces their psychological burden," stated Ms Kathy Oliver, co-founder and director of the IBTA. While listening to the patients and caregivers at ISNOCON, she highlighted that in her experience with her own son who had a brain tumor, most patients and caregivers wanted to share their difficult journey with others. She outlined the concept of "narrative medicine" which is an interdisciplinary field that encourages listening and creativity to improve healthcare. Through narrative medicine, patients and caregivers can voice their fears, triumphs and hopes so these experiences can be recognised and valued, thus humanising healthcare delivery.

The session also marked the inauguration of the "Brain Tumor Support Group of Bhopal". This group will conduct

bi-monthly meetings of brain tumor-affected patients and their family members. Dr Rakesh Jalali, an expert in the field of neuro-oncology, has held such sessions at the Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai, from 2002. He said that such self-help groups motivate patients and their relatives and instill confidence in them to overcome this difficult phase in their lives.

The famous Indian physician Charaka, the "Father of Indian Medicine of Ayurveda", mentioned in the second century BC: "A physician who fails to enter the body of the patient with the lamp of knowledge and understanding can never treat diseases. He should first study all the factors, including environment, which influence a patient's disease, and then prescribe treatment."

ISNO - with its multi-disciplinary approach and collaborative spirit - follows the same principle.

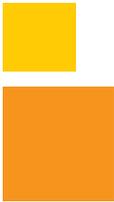
As a tribute to all those who have guided and led ISNO, a brief video on the History of ISNO was released at ISNOCON 2019 in Bhopal which is accessible online here: <https://youtu.be/jZ122uKGtfo>. ■

Dr RK Panday, Consultant Radiation Oncologist and Dr Nitin Garg, Consultant Neurosurgeon at Bansal Hospital, Bhopal organised ISNOCON 2019 this conference in association with Bhopal Neuro-Association and Bhopal Oncology Society.

An ISNOCON 2019 Album



(1) Dr Michael Prados, PNO (2) Dr Rashmi Chaudhary, scientist (3) Neuropathologists (from Left): Drs Kirti Gupta, Geeta Chacko, Chitra Sarkar, Vaishali Suri, Vani Santosh, Jhama Mishra, Namita Chaudhary (4) Kathy and Gordon Oliver (IBTA co-directors) at the IBTA information desk (5) Dr Vinay Puduvali, USA (6) Registration desk (7) IBTA Co-Director Kathy Oliver at the entrance to the ISNOCON meeting in Bhopal (8) Delegates participating actively (9) Lighting of the traditional lamp (an Indian tradition marking the beginning of an auspicious occasion) during the Inauguration Ceremony



(1) A relaxed evening with music and rendition of the Indian flute by Dr Manish Verma (2) Traditional Indian lunch (3) Delegates in one of the sessions (4) Dr Ching Lau, USA (5) Sharing a light moment (from left): Drs Chitra Sarkar, Geeta Chacko, Tejpal Gupta, Rakesh Jalali (6) From left Dr Harshad Patil, Mr Gordon Oliver, Dr Rajni Chaterjee, Dr Nitin Garg, Dr Renuka Garg, Mrs Kathy Oliver and Dr Puneet Gandhi



(1) Panel discussion on psycho-oncology (from left): Savita Goswami, Kathy Oliver, Prakash Chiotalkar, Rajni Chaterjee, Richa Priyamvada (2) The IBTA's Kathy and Gordon Oliver during an interview with radio jockey Pinki Tiwari (left) (3) Brain tumor survivors at ISNOCON 2019: Dr Sheuli Mitra, left, and Ms Sanjana Rautela, right (4) Dr Tejpal Gupta, Secretary, ISNO (5) Paintings made by pediatric brain tumor survivors handed to the conference organisers (from left): Drs Tejpal Gupta, Nitin Garg, Suresh Sankhla, RK Panday, Rakesh Jalali

From a handpainted original by a Brain Tumour Survivor

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of India**

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