

Cancer centre at district hospitals: Trained staff, chemotherapy, 4-6 beds

These details were outlined in a Parliamentary Standing Committee report, tabled on March 12, pertaining to the demand for grants by the Ministry

Written by [Anonna Dutt](#) [Follow](#)

New Delhi | Updated: March 18, 2025 05:24 IST



 4 min read





These are the key elements in the blueprint drawn up by the Union Health Ministry for the Government's ambitious initiative to establish cancer daycare centres in all district hospitals (Pixabay)

Chemotherapy, counselling services and medicine; four to six beds each; every facility to have an oncologist or a trained medical officer, along with two nurses, a pharmacist, a counsellor and a multi-purpose worker.

These are the key elements in the blueprint drawn up by the Union Health Ministry for the Government's ambitious initiative to establish **cancer daycare centres** in all district hospitals. These details were outlined in a Parliamentary Standing Committee report, tabled on March 12, pertaining to the demand for grants by the Ministry.

According to the Health Ministry's submission to the committee, **cancer** treatment will be made accessible closer to patients' homes after an initial plan is finalised at tertiary care or state centres.

Speaking to [The Indian Express](#), experts described the initiative as "a very good way to ensure continuity", especially with many of the at least 764 district hospitals across the country currently not equipped to offer cancer care.

Also Read | Cancer therapy comes closer to people's homes: How day care centres at district hospitals will change cancer care

In her [Budget](#) speech, Union Finance Minister [Nirmala Sitharaman](#) had announced that these centres would be set up over the next three years, with at least 200 centres slated to come up during the current financial year.

While the Government proposed that staff for these centres be drawn from the existing pool at district hospitals, the Parliamentary panel recommended "separate" recruitment.

"The Committee also desires that separate human Resources (including health professional and nurse) may be provided instead of seeking from the pool of District Hospital for smooth functioning of the centre since there are already scarcity of health professionals in the District Hospitals where such professionals must be made available," the panel report stated.

The **establishment of such centres** comes at a time when the incidence of cancer is on the rise, with one in nine people in the country likely to be affected.

India sees over 14 lakh cases and 9 lakh deaths in a year, according to data from the Global Cancer Observatory. The most common cancers among men are in the lip and oral cavity (15.6%), lung (8.5%) and oesophagus (6.6%) while for women, they are breast (26.6%), cervical (17.7%), and ovary (6.6%).

Also Read | Novel cancer therapy works for 73 per cent Indian patients in clinical trials: Why the Lancet report is significant

Reacting to the Government's initiative, Dr Sushma Bhatnagar, former head of the cancer centre at AIIMS, said, "Not all district hospitals in the country offer chemotherapy or other cancer treatment. If good quality care can be assured through these daycare centres at district levels, it will be a very good way to ensure continuity of care. Many times, cancer patients who come to AIIMS are unable to follow the treatment protocol prescribed by the doctor because they are unable to come back to [Delhi](#)."

Being a palliative care specialist, she also suggested that these centres should also provide pain management, which is a "low-cost, low-resource intervention". "Nearly 60% to 70% of all cancer patients need pain management and it is easy to provide through such centres," she said.

According to Dr Abhishek Shankar, an oncologist from AIIMS, the medical staff should be trained in managing side-effects as well.

"When we talk of starting such centres at district level, all of them are unlikely to have a medical oncologist. The doctors and staff at the centres will have to be trained in handling complications that come with administering chemotherapy. The centres should also be well equipped to handle these issues because sometimes they can be life-threatening," he said.

Shankar also pointed out that it "would be easier to establish such centres in states from the Northeast or in Kerala, among others, which already have cancer care being offered at district hospitals".



Anonna Dutt

Follow



Anonna Dutt is a Principal Correspondent who writes primarily on health at the Indian Express. She reports on myriad topics ranging from the growing burden of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension to the problems with pervasive infectious conditions. She **... Read More**

© The Indian Express Pvt Ltd

This article went live on March eighteenth, twenty twenty-five, at zero minutes past five in the morning.

TAGS: [AIIMS](#) [Cancer](#) [Global Cancer Concern India](#) [Nirmala Sitharaman](#) [Union Health Minister](#)