



Cancer Cases and Cure in India

For Prelims: [Cervical Cancer](#), Population Based Cancer Registries (PBCRs), The Lancet, National Centre for Disease Informatics and Research, [Indian Council of Medical Research \(ICMR\)](#)

For Mains: Rising Cases of Different forms of Cancer in India and its impact on Health Sector

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

A recent study published in **The Lancet Regional Health Southeast Asia** has revealed that there is a significant regional disparity in the survival rates of [cervical cancer](#) patients across India.

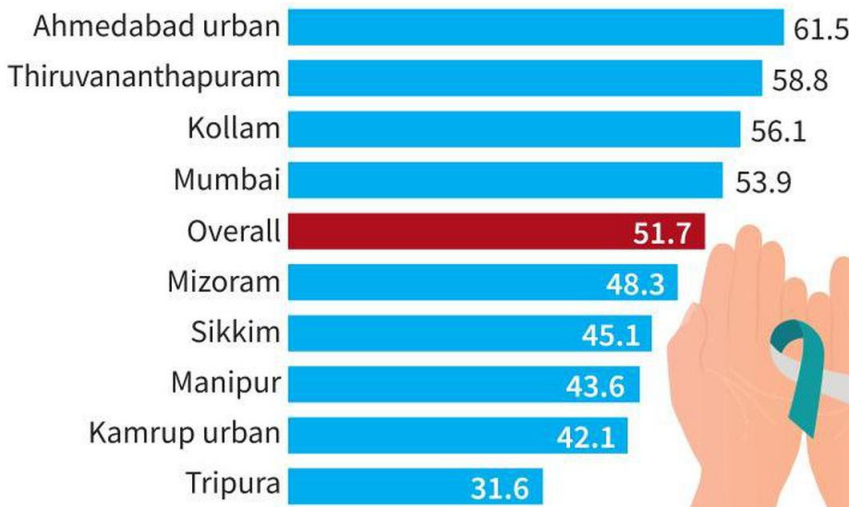
What Were the Key Findings Of the Study?

- **Survival rate:**
 - About 52% of cervical cancer cases diagnosed between 2012 and 2015 survived.
- **Variations Across Regions:**
 - Among those that participated in the study, the **Ahmedabad urban registry demonstrated the highest survival rate at 61.5%**, followed by Thiruvananthapuram with 58.8% and Kollam at 56.1%. In contrast, **Tripura reported a survival rate of 31.6%**.
- **Factors Contributing to Regional Disparities:**
 - The study noted that factors such as **access to diagnostic services, effective treatment, distance from clinical care facilities, travel costs, co-morbidities, and poverty** contributed to survival rates.

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Survival rates

The chart shows the survival rate (%) for cervical cancer across the 11 Population Based Cancer Registries (PBCRs)



Cervical Cancer

- Cervical cancer **develops in a woman's cervix** (the entrance to the uterus from the vagina).
- Almost all cervical cancer cases (**99%**) are linked to infection with high-risk [human papillomaviruses \(HPV\)](#), an extremely common virus transmitted through sexual contact.
- Two **HPV types (16 and 18)** are responsible for nearly 50% of high grade cervical pre-cancers.
- Cervical cancer is the **fourth most common cancer among women globally**. About 90% of the new cases and deaths worldwide in 2020 occurred in **low- and middle-income countries**.
- Comprehensive cervical cancer control includes **primary prevention** ([vaccination against HPV](#)), **secondary prevention** (screening and treatment of pre-cancerous lesions), **tertiary prevention** (diagnosis and treatment of invasive cervical cancer) and palliative care.

What are Some of the Challenges Faced by Healthcare Providers in Curing Cancer?

- **Heterogeneity of Cancer:** [Cancer](#) is not a single disease **but a group of diseases characterized by the uncontrolled division and growth of abnormal cells**. The heterogeneity of cancer makes it challenging to find a universal cure, as each type may require a different approach.
- **Late Diagnosis:** Many cancer cases are **diagnosed at an advanced stage, reducing the chances of a complete cure**. Early detection methods and public awareness are crucial but often lacking in many regions.
- **Treatment Toxicity:** Traditional cancer treatments, **such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy, can have severe side effects**, affecting a patient's quality of life. Developing targeted therapies with fewer side effects is a challenge.
- **Resistance to Treatment:** **Some cancers develop resistance to treatment over time, making it harder to cure**. Developing strategies to overcome resistance is a key challenge.
- **Cost of Treatment:** Cancer treatment **can be prohibitively expensive**, and not all patients can afford it. The high cost of cancer drugs and therapies is a significant barrier to curing cancer.
- **Lack of Access to Care:** In many regions, especially in low-income countries, there is a lack of access to cancer care facilities and specialists. This contributes to regional disparities in cancer outcomes.

- Apart from this, **lack of awareness among patients about their rights and obligations under the law and schemes and inadequate training and capacity building** for healthcare providers aggravate the issue.
- **Limited Availability of Specialized Care:** Specialized cancer care centers, equipped with the latest technology and skilled healthcare professionals, **are concentrated in urban areas**, leaving rural and remote areas underserved.
- **Stigmatization and Fear: Cultural and social stigmatization can lead to delayed diagnosis and treatment**, as patients may avoid seeking help due to fear, shame, or misinformation.

What are the Different Ways to Reduce Regional Disparities in Cancer Care in India?

- **Awareness and Education:** Launch public **awareness campaigns about cancer prevention, early detection, and available treatments**. These campaigns should be tailored to different regions and languages.
- **Preventive Measures:** Promote healthy lifestyles, discourage tobacco use, and emphasize the importance of regular screenings and vaccinations (**e.g., HPV vaccine for cervical cancer prevention**).
- **Primary Healthcare Strengthening:** Improve the quality and accessibility of primary healthcare in underserved regions. Develop a **network of primary healthcare centers** that can identify and refer to potential cancer cases.
- **Telemedicine:** Use **telemedicine and mobile health units** to provide cancer consultations and education to remote areas. This can help patients access expert opinions and guidance.
- **Government Initiatives:** Implement and fund government-sponsored cancer care initiatives, such as the **National Cancer Control Program**. Allocate resources to build and upgrade cancer treatment centers in underserved regions.
- **Subsidized Treatment:** Provide **subsidies for cancer treatment**, especially for economically disadvantaged patients, through government schemes and insurance programs.
- **Research and Development:** Invest in **cancer research and innovation to develop cost-effective treatments** and diagnostics. Encourage partnerships between government, academia, and the private sector.
- **Community Engagement:** Involve **local communities and NGOs in awareness campaigns and support services**. This can help in breaking down cultural stigmas and improving access to care.

What are the Government Initiatives Related to Cancer Treatment?

- [National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke](#)
- [National Cancer Grid](#)
- [National Cancer Awareness Day](#)
- [HPV Vaccine](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q 1. Consider the following statements: (2010)

1. The Taxus tree is naturally found in the Himalayas.
2. The Taxus tree is listed in the Red Data Book.
3. A drug called "taxol" is obtained from Taxus trees and is effective against Parkinson's disease.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

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