

# FORTUNE

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NEWS, EVENTS, PROMOTIONS + IDEAS

## GAME CHANGERS IN HEALTHCARE

FOCUS ON THE BEST HOSPITALS





# UNIVERSAL ONCOCARE: MAKING CANCER CARE AFFORDABLE TO ALL



From Left to Right: Dr. Tushar Jadhav, Dr. Ninad Katdare, Dr. Mishil Parikh, Dr. Rohit Pai



## **What is Universal Oncocare?**

Universal Oncocare Pvt. Ltd is a private limited company formed by four cancer specialists. We are a team of three cancer surgeons and one medical oncologist. After practicing in the real world; we realised that personalized oncology care was only offered in academic centres or bigger hospitals and many cancer patients with limited resources could only be treated in a piecemeal manner due to lack of multimodality treatment, expertise and cost. For instance, young patients with bone tumours involving limbs underwent amputation with resultant profound lifelong handicap when some of them could have been treated with a limb preserving surgery after chemotherapy. This motivated us to provide a platform for a complete oncology care under a multispecialty team in a cost-effective manner; the result of which is Universal Oncocare Pvt. Ltd.

## **Why is Universal Oncocare different from others?**

Universal Oncocare has been built on three pillars – Economic, Ethical and Evidence Based.

**ECONOMIC:** As we all know that cancer care is a multimodality treatment, which goes on over long durations. Unfortunately, this makes it a financial burden to the family. So, our focus has been to reduce costs wherever possible without hampering the treatment protocol and quality of care. Universal Oncocare has tie-ups with hospitals where there are provisions for charity as well as government schemes. Even in the open billing systems, the costs are kept at reasonable levels. For this purpose, we have started a stratified resource approach for treatment. We provide straightforward surgical treatments and chemotherapy treatments at small centres and day care centres. This drastically reduces our overheads, and we are able to extend this benefit to our patients in the form of a highly reduced cost. Only complex cases with comorbidities are treated at tertiary centres. We conduct daily audits to assess the need for investigations, changes in treatment, and so on, to keep a check on costs. This helps us reduce the costs significantly, which, again - we are able to share



with our patients. We also help patient to get help from various charities.

**ETHICAL:** At Universal Oncocare, we believe in a completely transparent approach. We explain all the treatment options to each and every patient with the risks and benefits involved with each. Every patient is discussed in a tumour board to decide the ideal treatment for the patient. All the costs of treatment are explained upfront so that the patient is not surprised by any last-minute costs.

**EVIDENCE BASED:** It has been shown scientifically that the best results in cancer care and best survival in cancer is only obtained when the treatment is given as per the latest scientific evidence. For this purpose, every patient is discussed in a tumour board. We have a unique concept of virtual tumour board where all the specialists can opine through an online platform. This helps patient get the opinion of all the specialists in a single step and the patient is also assured of the scientifically correct treatment.

### ***What are the specialities offered at Universal Oncocare?***

We have made a team of organ specific specialists. In Surgical Oncology we have dedicated specialist for each organ system eg breast, Liver, bone etc.

In Medical Oncology, we have dedicated specialists for adult cancers, paediatric cancers and blood cancers and in bone marrow transplantation

In Radiation Oncology, we have specialist trained in all types of radiotherapy like External Beam Radiotherapy (and its new techniques like IMRT/IGRT/VMAT) and brachytherapy. We liase with various radiation centres all across Mumbai metropolitan area where patient can opt the centre nearby their residence and complete their therapy conveniently by cutting short the hassle of long daily travel.

Other than these core specialities, we have a dedicated Cancer Nutritionist, Psycho-oncologist, Palliative and end of life care specialist and a life style counsellor.

We also have a dedicated team for home care and setting up ICU care at home for end stage patients.

### ***According to you, what are the biggest factors affecting cancer care in India?***

The three most important factors which affect cancer care in India are Ignorance, Affordability and Geography.

**IGNORANCE:** Many people are unaware of the symptoms of Cancer. They are also unaware of the various types of treatments. This leads to delay in diagnosis and treatment. We are setting up an education centre as part of Universal Oncocare through which free educational material will be distributed in various languages to people.

**AFFORDABILITY:** Studies have shown that almost 40% of patients in India are unable to complete cancer treatment because of costs. As the insurance penetration is low, majority of the patients have to bear the costs as "out-of-pocket" expenditure. This leads to "catastrophic expenditure" where in people end up selling their houses, land, livestock. This is the reason why we are affiliated to hospitals which also have government schemes and trusts. So that a significant portion of the patients can be helped. We are also in the process of starting a foundation where a part of the revenue will be put for helping poor.

**GEOGRAPHY:** Access to healthcare is very inequitable in India. Many patients have to travel for 2-3 days for treatment. The government and big hospitals are making great strides in making cancer care available to far corners of India by development of regional cancer centres and outreach centres. We are trying to emulate that in a small way by setting up outreach centres in Ratnagiri, Chopda and other tier 2/3 cities and district places. The aim being to make the best treatment accessible to all.

### ***How do you foresee the future of cancer treatment in India?***

We are poised at an interesting juncture in cancer care. On one hand is the speed at which rapid discoveries are being made leading to development of new drugs like immunotherapy and new techniques like PIPAC. Unfortunately, they are very expensive and not affordable to all. On the other hand, is the disparity of availability of cancer care. If this improves, then the global survival rates for cancer care will improve in India.

As the paper in Nature 2017 by Professor Sullivan, Professor Booth and Professor C.S. Pramesh (Director, Tata Memorial Hospital) rightly mentions "Cancer moonshots may improve outcomes in individual patients in high income countries with good governance. What India needs is "Cancer Earthshots" – delivering affordable, equitable and effective cancer care to all.

Universal Oncocare Pvt. Ltd  
email address : [universaloncocare@gmail.com](mailto:universaloncocare@gmail.com)  
contact number : 7977127921, 9320095507, 9820800648, 9820007628.