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RASHNI

LIGHTING THE PATH FOR EVERY CANCER FIGHTER

I Learnt to Smile Again...

*My journey through
cancer recovery*

- Prabal Singh

One Day at a Time

*What Caring for My Wife
Through Oral Cancer
Taught Me*

- Yash Chaturvedi

**The Architect of Recovery:
*My New Starting Line***

- Dr. Abhilasha Agarwal



Message from the Chairman

Cancer care continues to evolve, and so does our commitment to every patient and family who walks through our doors. As we bring you the third edition of this newsletter, our focus turns to oral cancer-an area where awareness, early detection, and timely treatment can make a meaningful difference.

Every patient's journey inspires us to advance our understanding, embrace newer technologies, and strengthen a comprehensive cancer programme where patients feel informed, supported, and cared for. Through this edition, we hope to bring greater awareness, encourage timely action, and highlight the possibilities that modern cancer care offers. Together, let us continue striving toward better outcomes and better lives.

Dr. Ashok Vaid

Chairman,
Medanta Cancer Institute



Letter from the Editor

Oral cancer is never just a diagnosis-it can affect a person's ability to eat, speak, connect, and experience everyday life. For patients and families, navigating diagnosis, treatment, recovery, and the questions that arise in between can often feel overwhelming.

With this edition, our goal is to bring greater awareness and understanding of oral cancer, from recognising early warning signs and risk factors to exploring advances in diagnosis and treatment. Whether you are seeking information, undergoing treatment, or supporting someone through their cancer journey, we hope these pages bring clarity, confidence, and a sense of support.

Dr. Deepak Sarin

Chairman,
Head and Neck Oncology



Easy-to-Swallow Foods During Oral Cancer Treatment

Simple food choices to make eating easier, support nutrition, and maintain strength during treatment

01

Soft and Well-Cooked Foods

Choose foods that are soft, moist and easy to chew, such as khichdi, porridge, soft rice, dal, mashed vegetables and well-cooked pasta.

02

Protein-Rich Foods

Include soft sources of protein such as eggs, paneer, curd, yoghurt, tofu, soft fish and well-cooked lentils to help maintain strength and support recovery.

03

Smooth and Nourishing Options

Soups, smoothies, milkshakes and blended meals can provide calories and nutrients when chewing or swallowing becomes difficult. Keep them smooth and easy to swallow.

04

Moist and Easy-to-Swallow Meals

Add gravies, sauces, curd or broth to meals to make them softer and easier to swallow. Take small bites and eat slowly.

Stay hydrated and choose foods based on your ability to chew and swallow. If swallowing is painful or difficult, speak to your treating team or dietitian for personalised guidance.



The Architect of Recovery: My New Starting Line

For most of my life, I have sat on the "healer's side" of the consultation table. As a practicing Physician, my days were defined by the steady rhythm of clinical care and my personal devotion to movement - aerobics, swimming, badminton, and the meditative pound of my feet against the pavement during my morning runs. Fitness was not merely a hobby; it was woven into my DNA.

Four years ago, that rhythm was abruptly broken. What began as a persistent mouth ulcer culminated in a single, life-altering message on my phone: squamous cell carcinoma of the floor of the mouth. As a lifelong non-smoker and non-drinker, the diagnosis felt like a cruel anomaly. In an instant, the physician became the patient, facing a race I hadn't trained for.

My search for a solution led my husband and me to Medanta, where we met Dr. Deepak Sarin. In that first meeting, his infectious confidence transformed our fear into a plan. Dr. Sarin didn't just offer surgery; he offered a multidisciplinary team - oncologists, plastic surgeons, and specialised therapists - and a revolutionary approach to reconstruction.

To eliminate the cancer, a portion of my jaw had to be resected. However, the true medical marvel lay in the reconstruction. Utilising *3D CAD-CAM planning*, **Dr. Sarin's team** used the fibula bone from my leg and tissues from my thigh to rebuild my jaw. Through 3D-printed guides, they were able to duplicate the natural contour of my face, "replacing like for like" to ensure my quality of life remained intact. It was a monumental 12-hour feat of medical engineering.

The initial steps of recovery were gruelling - a marathon run against a fierce headwind. I went from high-intensity workouts to struggling to walk steadily. But the fighter in me realised this was not a finish line, but a new starting point. I approached my rehabilitation with the same patience and persistence I used to train for races, celebrating every small victory: the first time standing alone, the first slow walk, and the eventual return of my voice.

Today, I am four years cancer-free.

I have reclaimed my life in its entirety. I am back in my clinic seeing patients, back on the yoga mat, and lacing up my shoes for my morning runs. I don't see any scars when I look in the mirror; I see a testament to resilience and the brilliance of modern medicine.

To any patient standing at the threshold of a similar journey: do not fear. With the right team, a positive spirit, and the courage to take the first step, you can return to the life you love. Cancer tried to sideline me, but it only taught me that while the race may change, we simply find new, stronger ways to run it.



Dr. Abhilasha Agarwal

I Learnt to Smile Again

My journey through cancer, recovery and finding strength within myself.

For almost five years, I ignored recurring ulcers in my mouth. They would come and go, and I kept telling myself,
“It’s just an ulcer.”

Then, after moving to Indore, an ENT surgeon advised a biopsy.

I still remember that evening. I was sitting with my family, watching television, when I Googled the words on my report.

— Squamous Cell Carcinoma.

The screen said cancer

For a moment, everything went silent.

I told my wife not to share it with anyone, but inside, I was scared - not just of cancer, but of losing the life I knew.

Then I met **Dr. Deepak Sarin**. His confidence gave me the courage to stop imagining the worst and start believing in the present.

My elder brother Dr. Atul Pratap Singh closed his clinic and stayed with me 24*7 for seven days during my surgery. His support was of immense value for me during the most difficult phase of my fight with cancer.

The surgery happened. Recovery was not easy. I needed speech therapy and physiotherapy. There were painful days, weak days and days when fear returned.

Later, new ulcers brought back my fear and I went through a difficult emotional phase. But with my wife beside me and guidance from Medanta doctors,
I started rebuilding my life.

At 51, I started an Instagram page and returned to fitness. Today, I can deadlift 160 kg.



Mr. Prabal Singh

Fighter & Survivor

Whenever my doctor came to see me, he would simply say:

“Smile.” 😊

Slowly, I understood why.

***A smile meant
I was still here.
Still healing.***

***Cancer is still part of my story,
but it is no longer the author of my story.***

CAD-CAM-Guided Jaw Reconstruction

How digital planning is changing outcomes for oral cancer patients



Dr. Deepak Sarin

Chairman,
Head and Neck Oncology

Oral cancer surgery, tumour resection, mandibulectomy or maxillectomy, flap reconstruction, often followed by radiotherapy, can leave anatomy that's difficult to rehabilitate. CAD-CAM has changed that. It lets our oncology, reconstructive and prosthetic teams plan the entire treatment pathway together, before the first incision is made, with the patient's eventual function and quality of life built into the plan from day one. Here's what that actually means.

What CAD-CAM Actually Does

Preoperative CBCT/CT, intraoral scans and virtual surgical planning are merged into a single 3D model of the tumour, the surrounding bone and the future prosthetic outcome. This lets the surgical team simulate the resection and reconstruction before the actual surgery and for cases needing a mandibulectomy, plan osteotomy sites, fibula dimensions and placement, plate position and 3D skeletal contour with precision down to millimetres.

Why This Matters Even With Radiotherapy Ahead

Radiotherapy brings reduced vascularity, xerostomia, soft-tissue fibrosis and impaired bone healing, real risks for osteoradionecrosis and later implant failure. Because CAD-CAM planning happens up front, radiation history and dose to the planned site can be factored into the reconstruction itself, not discovered as a problem after the fact.

The result is a jaw that's reconstructed not just with a filler in the defect, but to a shape and bone contour that mimics the original jaw and that anticipates the final restoration, better bone stock where it's needed, more predictable implant trajectories, and a smoother path to rehabilitation later.



~60,000–70,000 NEW CASES**
are diagnosed in India every year,
and even more go unreported.



Mouth cancer is detected late because early signs are painless and often ignored.

Caring for Caregiver

One Day at a Time:

What Caring for My Wife Through Oral Cancer Taught Me

Two years ago, when my wife was diagnosed with oral cancer, our lives changed overnight.

Caregiving was not only about appointments and treatment plans. It was about being present, holding her hand through moments and reminding her that she would never face this alone.

Over these two years, I have learnt many lessons. At the centre of them all is acceptance.

One Day at a Time The most powerful lesson was not to carry the entire journey at once. So we learnt to focus on one thing: today.

Do what needs to be done today.
Tomorrow will come with its own answers.

Make Space for Happiness

We consciously made space for happiness each day. Cancer can easily become the centre of life, but we did not want it to take over. These moments reminded us that while cancer was part of our life, life was still much bigger than cancer.

Being There Is Often Enough

As caregivers, we sometimes feel we must have all the answers. I learnt that what matters most is often simply being there.

A patient experiences physical discomfort, uncertainty and fear. Knowing someone is walking beside them can make a tremendous difference.

Sometimes, holding a hand is enough. Sometimes, listening is enough. Sometimes, saying, "I am here, and we will face this together," is enough.

Caregivers must stay involved and connected with the treating team while helping the patient maintain normalcy.

Every cancer journey is different.

My message to another caregiver is simple: do not try to fight the entire battle today.

Be there. Hold their hand.

Find moments of happiness whenever you can.

*Take life one day
at a time. Together.*

Mrs. Maneesha Chaturvedi

Wife

Mr. Yash Chaturvedi

Caregiver



6 Questions to Ask Your Doctor After an Oral Cancer Diagnosis

An oral cancer diagnosis can bring many questions, not only about the disease, but also about treatment, appearance, speech, swallowing, nutrition and life after treatment.



Dr. Kanika Rana

Senior Consultant,
Head and Neck Oncology

Here are six important questions to discuss with your treating team.

01 What is the stage and extent of my oral cancer?

The stage tells us how far the cancer has progressed and whether nearby lymph nodes or other structures are involved. Knowing the stage helps you understand why a particular treatment is being recommended and what outcomes may be expected.

02 What is the best treatment for me and what is its goal?

Oral cancer treatment is highly individualised. Depending on the site, stage and other factors, treatment may involve surgery, radiation, systemic therapy or a combination of these.

Clarity about the treatment goal is important from the very beginning.

03 If I need surgery, how will my ability to eat, speak and swallow be preserved?

Successful cancer treatment is not only about removing the disease, it is also about preserving function and quality of life wherever possible.

Reconstructive surgery and rehabilitation can help restore structures affected by treatment and support speaking, eating and swallowing.

04 What should I expect during recovery?

Recovery continues well beyond the completion of treatment. Depending on your needs, it may include nutrition support, speech and swallowing therapy, dental care and physical rehabilitation.

Knowing what lies ahead and beginning rehabilitation at the right time, can make the transition back to everyday life smoother.

05 How will I be monitored after treatment?

Completing treatment is a major milestone, but regular follow-up remains essential.

Clinical examinations and investigations, when required, help doctors monitor recovery, identify a recurrence early and manage any long-term effects of treatment.*

06 What can I do to protect my health after oral cancer?

If you use tobacco or alcohol, stopping these habits is one of the most important steps you can take.

Good oral hygiene, a healthy lifestyle and regular follow-ups also play an important role in protecting your health after treatment.

*Cancer care is not only about treating the disease, it is about helping people return to life with **confidence, function and quality of life.***

For patients and caregivers, asking the right questions can bring clarity at every stage.

Stay informed, stay vigilant and remain an active partner in your care.

The 2-Week Rule

Don't ignore the smallest sign. If any **patch, ulcer** or **sore** in the mouth lasts more than **14 days**, see a specialist.

If you currently use tobacco, or have used it in the past, an oral screening once a year is advisable



Scan to check your risk

