



Indian Cooperative  
Oncology Network



Integrated Academic Society  
of Clinical Oncology



Indian Society of Medical  
& Paediatric Oncology

# Joint Advisory for Cancer Patients (19<sup>th</sup> March 2020)

Dear Patients,

The Indian Cooperative Oncology Network (ICON), Integrated Academic Society of Clinical Oncology (IASCO) and Indian Society of Medical and Paediatric Oncology (ISMPO) are releasing this joint Advisory in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 (now called 'SARS-CoV-2') outbreak in the interest of maintaining your health and minimizing the risk of getting infected with this virus. Please understand that this is an extraordinary situation with no 'ideal' or 'perfect' solutions. The situation is changing rapidly, so we may modify this Advisory or issue additional advisories as required.

The following points are for your information and consideration, based on available evidence as of today, and subject to change as new evidence emerges:

1. Please follow social distancing and stay at home as much as possible.
2. Patients on chemotherapy are at a higher risk to contract infections including COVID-19. They are also at a higher risk of complications due to such infections. This is because their immunity is suppressed compared to normal individuals.
3. Elderly patients, and those with hematological malignancies or who are post-bone marrow transplant, are likely to be at highest risk during the COVID-19 outbreak.
4. Please consider delaying palliative chemotherapy in consultation with your oncologist. You need to balance the risk of getting infection with COVID-19 versus risk of cancer progression if you decide to continue/stop/delay chemotherapy.
5. Curative intent chemotherapy may be continued or deferred based on the balance between the possible benefit from continued chemotherapy versus possible harm due to risk of getting infected. Please discuss this with your oncologist, preferably through a remote method like email, etc.
6. Should you decide to continue with your planned chemotherapy, it means that you have understood the risks involved in undergoing chemotherapy under the current COVID-19 outbreak situation.
7. Please avoid crowded areas including waiting areas in clinics, restaurants, public transport facilities etc. which may expose you to higher chance of infection with COVID-19, as much as possible.



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8. Please postpone non-urgent appointment with your oncologist or other physicians. Consider using telephone, email, WhatsApp or similar means where possible.

9. Please follow all personal protection initiatives, including but not limited to, meticulous hand washing with soap and water, use of sterilizers, etc. Follow all instructions and recommendations given by the government and local authorities.

10. For patients on immunotherapy, targeted therapies, anti-angiogenic therapies, and maintenance therapy, the decision to stop or continue will have to be taken on a case-to-case basis in consultation with the treating physician.

11. Some investigations like pulmonary function testing, bronchoscopy, endoscopy, dental evaluation, etc. may confer a higher risk of exposure to patients and healthcare workers, and these would have to be used judiciously after weighing the risk/benefit ratio carefully.

12. In case you develop symptoms suggestive of possible COVID-19 infection, such as fever, sore throat, cough or breathing difficulty, report to your treating doctor as well as local government health authorities. You can find local COVID-19 testing centres near you at <https://www.icmr.nic.in/content/covid-19>.

13. These are temporary but potentially lifesaving measures that you are strongly advised to follow until the COVID-19 outbreak is controlled.

Our best wishes to you and your loved ones for good health and happiness.