Pact on cancer technology

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Guwahati, March 17: Dr B. Borooah Cancer Institute (BBCI) today signed a three-year memorandum of understanding (MoU) on exchange of students and faculty with Kochi-based superspeciality hospital Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Centre (AIMS) to impart training on the latest technology of oncology.

According to the MoU, the two institutes will exchange their post-graduate students and faculty of oncology at an interval of four to six months.

BBCI director Amal Chandra Kataki said, "Faculty from AIMS will participate in a clinical and academic programme at the institute and provide training on the latest technology on oncology. Our faculty and students will also have the opportunity to visit AIMS and learn about their ways of treatment."

He said Assam doesn't have the cutting-edge technologies to treat cancer yet but since the population-based cancer registries (PBCR) data reveals that the Northeast has the highest number of cancer cases in the world, it is only a matter of time that more government and private players will come here and bring along the latest technology to fight the disease.

"We need our students and doctors to be prepared to utilise those technologies to the fullest," he added.

The PBCR data, compiled by the Indian Council of Medical Research, reveals that Assam ranks fourth in the country in terms of prevalence of cancer cases.

Dev Narayan Dutta, head of the department of radiation oncology of AIMS, who was here to sign the MoU, termed the exchange programme a "symbiotic arrangement".

"The students and faculty in Assam have the expertise of dealing with a huge number of cases with limited technology since the state lacks proper infrastructure. In our institution, we have state-of-the-art technology but are unable to deal with a huge number of patients. Through this programme, our students will get to know about the varieties of the disease that are prevalent here while the students in Assam will learn how to handle the latest technologies," he said.

Dutta said AIMS gets around 7,000 cancer patients annually while Kataki claimed that BBCI deals with about 1,000 new and 80,000 old patients every year.

"In Assam, cases of oesophagus, hypopharynx, gall bladder, prostate and ovary cancer are very common, while in our institute in Kerala we attend to patients with lung, thyroid and breast cancers more. Therefore, this exchange programme is mutually beneficial," Dutta said.

AIMS, which is a referral hospital of the Assam government, has 2,000-bed superspecialty facility in 12 departments apart from having 45 other departments. It is one of the six institutes in the country that has Cyberknife and Tomotherapy, the two latest therapies, to treat small cancer tumours.

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