

Cancer care set for digital leap

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Mumbai: Cancer care in India is poised for a digital leap. In a country where patients spend months before getting the right diagnosis and treatment, a digital network that hopes to soon serve as a connection between all the hospitals on India's National Cancer Grid, will now help patients reach the right doctor quicker. The network is a shared venture of cancer hospitals, led by the city's Tata Memorial Hospital, and Tata Consultancy Services.

The digital nerve centre, to be inaugurated by Tata Sons chairman N Chandra-

sekaran at Tata Memorial Hospital, Parel, on Sunday, will link the hospital with the Tata Medical Centre in Kolkata, the Cancer Institute in Chennai and the Regional Cancer Centre in Thiruvananthapuram. "Soon, the digital centre will connect all 108 hospitals that are part of India's National Cancer Grid," said Tata Memorial Centre director Dr Rajendra Badwe.

Cancer is one of India's biggest health challenges. Around 10 lakh new cancer cases are detected every year, with seven lakh patients in various stages of treatment succumbing to its complications. A recent study by PGIMER-Chandigarh showed the average time between a patient not-



All cancer hospitals that are part of India's National Cancer Grid will soon be connected by a digital network to allow patients easy access to timely treatment

icing a cancer symptom and the diagnosis is four months, but could even extend to three years.

"The digital nerve centre will act as a one-stop centre for anyone who suspects he has cancer or has just been di-

agnosed," said cancer surgeon Dr C Pramesh of Tata Memorial Hospital. "All a person has to do is call up a phone number where trained individuals, including doctors, will speak to him/her about the symptoms and suggest an oncologist at the nearest cancer centre." Thereafter, the network will also help patients fix up appointments with doctors, send reminders about follow-up visits, and laboratory tests. The patient's entire medical file will also be available in a digital format, making it easier to seek second opinions. "The nerve centre can be used not only for oncology, but can similarly link up heart or infectious diseases specialities," said Dr Pramesh.