

'Most women can't afford cervical cancer vaccines'



Cervical cancer is the second largest form of cancer that affect women in Karnataka. The vaccine, however, is way out of reach for the families of many girls.

With no Indian company manufacturing the vaccine, prices for this vaccine range anywhere between Rs 2,300 and Rs 3,200 each. This is just the MRP at pharmacies. Doctor's consultation fee is an additional burden. Amid the debate over the effectiveness and the need for a vaccine, a few from the medical fraternity have been promoting the vaccine. Dr S G Kasi, paediatrician, Kasi Clinic said that with an increased incidence of the cancer in the country, there is a need for the vaccine.

"The one peculiar thing about this form of cancer is that it is caused by the Human Immuno Papilloma Virus. Strains 16 and 18 of the virus is responsible for 83% of the disease. Vaccines provide effective protection against this," he said. On the scepticism about its effectiveness, Kasi said several international studies had emerged over the last few years in support of the vaccine. Three doses of the vaccine have to be taken for those aged above 15 years and two doses for those below 14 years of age. "At present, there are two vaccines in the market. One of them is priced at Rs 2,300, while the other gives protection against genital warts, and that is priced at Rs 3,100," he said. He added that should the vaccines be given at a government set-up,...

"At present, only the private sector is offering the vaccine. Government hospitals do not keep stocks of the vaccine," Kasi said. Dr Pallavi V R, HoD, gynaec-oncology, Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology, said the vaccine was in the market for 10 years now. "In a country like ours, where screening is less, the vaccine is essential. However, affordability is a problem," she said.

"Even at Kidwai, we do not have the vaccine available over the counter. When patients ask for it, we procure it from the company," she said, adding that there was a need for the government to procure the vaccine and offer it at a lower cost.