



## CANCER IS NOT A DEATH SENTENCE – EARLY DETECTION SAVES LIVES

Meena Bijlani, a housewife from New Delhi, found a lump on her left breast on 1 July 2013. The 55-year-old mother of two immediately asked her closest ally – her husband, Prakash – for a second opinion and they both agreed to go to their doctor that same day. This quick action means that seven months later, Meena is nearing the end of her treatment and is about to be given the all clear. She is on the brink of winning her personal battle with cancer.

“When we first heard the news I was taken aback. We were upset and I cried. After the initial shock, I was determined to start treatment as soon as possible. I have two neighbours who have had breast cancer, so I knew it was something that could be treated.”

The same day Meena found the lump, her doctor referred her for tests and these confirmed their worst fears – Meena had a 2.3 cm long cancerous growth. With cancer, early detection and swift action are key to a positive treatment outcome. On 19 July, Meena had an operation to remove the lump. Since that operation, she has undergone 33 radiotherapy sessions and is on the third of six chemotherapy sessions. Her doctors at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, are pleased with her progress and believe that soon she will be rid of the disease.

“The surgery and the radiotherapy were fine. I had no side-effects. But when I started chemotherapy, my hair fell out. I know it is temporary and will continue to fight on. My family have been a great help. My husband is even more attentive than he was before. There has been a definite change in him. My sons too.

“For now, I can’t wait to finish treatment. I have three more chemotherapy sessions and then I’ll be free from this disease. During the treatment we have stopped going out in order to reduce the risk of me catching some kind of virus or infection. I’m looking forward to going back to the same life we had before I was sick.”

The secret to Meena’s success is clear. In her words:

“If you have any symptoms, don’t ignore them. Go to your doctor as soon as possible. I want to tell any woman who finds a lump not to be scared but to deal with it immediately. This is a curable disease.”

**Reduce cancer risk by leading a healthy lifestyle – avoid tobacco and alcohol, maintain a healthy weight, engage in regular physical activity and eat a healthy diet.**

### CANCER: FACT BOX

- 8.2 million people died from cancer in 2012: 1.2 million of these are in South-East Asia
- South-East Asia has an estimated 1.7 million new cancer cases each year
- Cancer of the breast and cervix are the most common cancers for women in the Region
- Lung and oral cavity cancers are the most common cancers for men in the Region

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