

A Case Study on “Uncancer India: A Hope for Survival”

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ABSTRACT

As a young student, Mr Arvind arrived from his home town of Warangal district in Andhra Pradesh in the year 2011, to the city of dreams Mumbai, to pursue his passion for serving the society and creating social impact through his education and talent. However, one fateful day Arvind was diagnosed with cancer. His treatment started, and he successfully survived the deadly disease. This incident acted as a trigger for him to think about the lakhs of Indians who are fighting against cancer. The dilemma for him was that if he had to face so many challenges, what about the several others? How difficult is it for the families of other patients who are trying to save the lives of their loved ones? Thus, he decided to provide navigational support to mainly bridge the information gaps in terms of finance, diagnostic help, and geographical barriers to cancer patients and also effective networking amongst cancer patients. Hence, came his Venture "Uncancer India" for cancer patients. Through this case, we are going to find will Arvind plans to reach out to the millions of cancer patients through a sustainable business model.

1. Journey from Cancer to Uncancer

After completing his B.Tech Degree in Computer Science in 2009 from an Engineering College in Warangal, he joined Market Research Company as a Media Analyst. However, he decided to live his dream for serving the society, and he subsequently joined Tata Institute of Social Sciences at Mumbai for a Masters program in Social Entrepreneurship in 2011. While he was fully engrossed in his studies, he was all of a sudden diagnosed with cancer, though he had specific symptoms earlier as well. Suddenly all his world came crashing down, but he decided that being diagnosed with cancer is not the end of the road, nor is the treatment methods used to fight the deadly disease. After one year of intensive treatment, he won the battle against cancer and also returned to continue his Master's course in December 2012. Arvind thought to raise his voice against cancer and strive towards sharing information and connecting cancer patients who suffer like him. From being a simple social science student to fighting cancer, the last year had taught many things to Arvind. He found out that many cancer patients in India may be lonely, confused, scared and badly in need appropriate information and guidance.

The year was 2013-14 that Arvind strongly felt that he could do a lot to alleviate this deadly disease from those suffering through robust navigational support. Thus, he set to start working with cancer patients in learning about their challenges and problems. Cancer he realized is a far deeper problem than he initially imagined it. With more than 100 types of cancers, the challenges each person's faces vary significantly falling across different domains such as finance, support, access to healthcare, diagnostics and others. Thus, was born his Entrepreneurial venture "Uncancer India" for cancer patients. He along with Mr Chirag whom he met at an incubation centre while researching on the start-up needs, found that information asymmetry was the first issue, wherein proper guidance and direction was not available to those suffering, likewise finding a Doctor, Disease Management, Financial implications, Travel and Accommodation

arrangements, etc. India primarily houses 27 Regional Cancer Centres, with an average of 1.2 million cancer patients diagnosed per annum and 2.5 million already living with cancer. With 120 types of cancer and different reasons for each, effective networking and information sharing form the need of the hour.

2. Cancer Situation In India

Arvind took up the cause of Cancer eradication through an information sharing Venture, which is a very noble initiative as cancer remains one of the leading causes of adult deaths worldwide. In India, the International Agency for Research on Cancer estimated indirectly that about 635,000 people died from cancer in 2008, representing about 8% of all estimated global cancer deaths and about 6% of all deaths in India. Cancer pervasiveness in India is predicated on being around 2.5 million, with over 800,000 new cases occurring per year. The approximate number of cancer deaths in India is estimated to increase because of population explosion, industrialization, urbanization, lifestyle changes and increasing life expectancy. India is a culturally diverse country, with substantial regional and rural-to-urban variation in lifestyles and age-specific adult death rates, there are significant variations in the type of cancer in various regions and subpopulations of India. More than 70% of calamitous cancers occur in the ages of 28–69 years. The percentages of cancer deaths were generally similar between rural and urban areas. A large proportion of cancer deaths in middle age arise from tobacco-related cancers, particularly in the northeastern states of India (See Exhibit 1). Lip, Oral cavity & Pharynx Cancer in Men & Cervical Cancer in a woman is the most common cancer responsible for the death in Indians, based on the study conducted & funded by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation & US National Institute of Health.

3. Objectives of case

1. Understanding different business models for social ventures/start-ups

2. Understanding different sources of revenue stream generation for a social-start-up
3. Design a sustainable business model

4. Project Uncancer

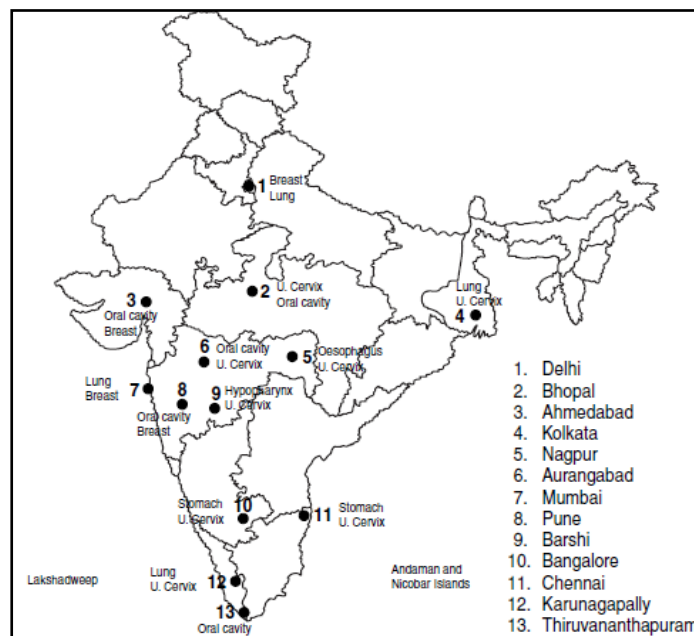
Diagnostic infrastructure in the country is poor. There are many regions in the country which do not have a pathologist and pathology/cytology services, which are essential for diagnosing cancer. Economic and geographic constraints and lack of workforce have contributed to the urban concentration of facilities. An unestimated number of cancers diagnosed in the population is not treated. Untreated patients are likely to demand more resources from society Arvind's venture Uncancer India; plans to provide navigational support through one-on-one connect between a cancer patient and survivor by building a network of the cancer community and sharing disease-related information, medical treatment such as second opinion services from International Oncologists and medical advice by connecting to medical professionals such as doctors and other paramedical professionals spread over across all sections of the society.

All elements of cancer control, from surveillance to palliative care, are not linked and coordinated. Uncancer India aims to use well-built online platform for information sharing, networking, resources for the cancer community in India.

Arvind already has started working on his project; he has launched a web portal Uncancer.org, to facilitate connectivity between Cancer patients irrespective of their geographical barriers. He already has registered his venture as a Trust and in the process of registering it as a Private limited company.

5. The Challenges Ahead

There is a vast population of cancer patients, which represents a largely unexplored market in India in terms of Information sharing and connectivity among patients is concerned. It requires many resources to fulfil the needs of patients, who are the target market for Uncancer India. However, Arvind needs to collate all these resources, which is a challenge which he wants to undertake. Bringing the experts on board, a mechanism to connect the cancer patients spread across different geographical locations to the cancer survivors, networking support with hospitals, diagnostic labs, NGO's and other players in the Cancer Ecosystem. However, Arvind's strong ethical stance is not permitting him to tie-up with Hospitals, Diagnostic Centres and other service providers. He has planned to generate revenue through the second-opinion services from International Oncologists and the traffic on his website. However, Arvind is concerned about his business model for Uncancer India and how to sustain and scale-up his Venture in the future.



Source: M. Krishnan Nair, Cherian Varghese, R. Swaminathan (2015), "Cancer: Current Scenario, Intervention Strategies and Projections For 2015"

Questions

1. What is a Business Model? What are the different types of Business Model?
2. Who are the stakeholders in the Medical Ecosystem and the challenges faced by the cancer patients in India?
3. How can information technology be leveraged for disseminating information about medical ecosystem?

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