

A 10-minute test could save your life

October is Breast Cancer Awareness month. Three foundations come together to offer for the first time a free mobile testing facility

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Why me?" were the thoughts that raced through 50-year-old Dr Anju Dave's* mind as the doctors at the mobile breast cancer testing facility called her up to come in for further tests. Panic gripped her... "the surgery will disfigure me, the chemotherapy will make me go bald and then I'll die," she told her family members who were equally shaken by the news.

But yesterday we happened to see Anju, less than a week after surgery. She's a happy, healthy woman who went back to work (she is a psychiatrist), just 24 hours after surgery. Sprightly Anju, who joined a group of her community people, just out of curiosity, to attend a free testing facility in her area, it was indeed a godsend. Latest technology available through a UK-based company had helped radiologist, Dr Srikala to detect a cancerous lesion just about .5cm. "In India we are used to seeing lesions that are usually big lumps as



Cancer detection is just a mammogram away

women come in for screening at an advanced stage of cancer. My training in UK has helped me a lot to

detect these minute specks that can lead to full-blown cancer. For Anju it could have been a matter of just six months," she explains.

"People who undergo a mammogram here, go through a procedure called double reporting. And therefore the chances of finding out minute calcifications, that can lead to cancer can be detected early. In the case of Dave, when we sent the tissue for biopsy, the pathologist confirmed that it was cancerous," says Dr P Raghu Ram, Consultant Oncoplastic Breast Surgeon.

Early detection not only saves lives but also reduce trauma and the cost of surgery. October being the month for Breast Cancer Awareness, three foundations have come together to bring about awareness about breast cancer and offer free testing. A routine mammo-

gram costs Rs 1,200 to 1,500 in the city and this is now available, free at the Mobile Breast Cancer facility until October end.

Women over 40 and who haven't gone for routine screening in the past two years are strongly recommended by doctors to undergo the test. The test takes just about 10 minutes, which includes an examination by a doctor and then the mammogram. Every day more than 20 women are being screened. Services are available upon registration till the end of the month, and many organisations have participated.

Deaths due to breast cancer are increasing in India. About 1,00,000 new cases of breast cancer are reported every year, according to the ICMR. "This is just the tip of the iceberg as many cases are unregistered," cautions Dr Raghu Ram, who plans to introduce digital mammograms in Hyderabad to make screening tests quicker and more accurate.

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The mobile breast cancer facility doing the city rounds