



EXPERIENCE

The story of my very first period!

AYANA FARUK PURNOTA

It was the 29th of March in the year 2023. The day was as usual for me, I woke up at six o'clock in the morning then I had my breakfast and got ready to go to school. I played along with my friends and had loads of fun. When the bell rang we all rushed into our classroom.

In the middle of science class, I felt a slight pain in the lower part of my belly. In the afternoon, when my school hours were over, my mother came to pick me up from my school. After coming back home, I hurried to the washroom and saw a blood stain in my pant!

As I have already read my mother's book on menstruation, who is a famous Gynecologist, I was surprised and happy at the same time. I called my mother. She guided me how to manage my period.

My mother gave me medicine when I felt pain in my lower belly and it went away. My father helped me to get sanitary pads. As I was on my period, my parents became more cautious about my nutritious diet. I started light exercise for my growth and development. Next morning, when I went to my school, I informed my teacher that I experienced my very first period and my teacher supported me in many ways and also guided me regarding the disposal of the sanitary napkins.

What terrifies me is that, there is no clean toilet with adequate water facilities, soap and disposal bin in the public places where I frequently visit. I think our authorities would take the necessary actions for it to make these available for us.

I wish happy, healthy period experiences for all!

The writer is a student, and health activist.

Transforming lives: Exploring Singapore's cutting-edge cancer treatment facilities

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Singapore, a vibrant hub of innovation and world-class healthcare, has emerged as a beacon of hope for individuals battling cancer. With its relentless pursuit of medical excellence and state-of-the-art facilities, the city-state has established itself as a leading destination for advanced cancer treatment. In this article, we delve into the remarkable cancer treatment facilities available in Singapore, where a synergy of groundbreaking technologies, renowned medical professionals, and compassionate care converge to provide patients with unparalleled support and effective treatment options. From innovative research initiatives to comprehensive patient-centric approaches, Singapore's oncology centers offer a glimpse into a future where defeating cancer is no longer an elusive dream but an achievable reality.

Prof Toh Han Chong, Senior Consultant and Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Strategic Partnerships) & Senior Consultant at National Cancer Centre Singapore shared his views with Star Health on his recent visit to Bangladesh.

About the latest developments in cancer treatment that they offer in Singapore, Prof Toh said that they would like to feel that they can get all the drugs available from the western counterparts. For example, when the American Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approves a drug, they want to get it as quickly as possible. It means every time there is an agency approval by the FDA, it is instantly approved in Singapore, whether it is immunotherapy or any conventional therapy.

Singapore is introducing the sophisticated proton beam therapy for cancer treatment. It is for certain people where the cancer is hard to reach and for certain kinds of cancer where you need to minimise side effects. He further said that the Singapore government has invested so much in research. As they invested in research and development over 20 years ago, they have built up a very strong research development reputation.

In an answer to a question how the cancer treatment options are different in Singapore or why should people see cancer treatment, Dr Toh said that they have built

a strong healthcare system. Part of it is because of the doctors, nursing and, of course, the technology. A very important thing in healthcare industry is trust. Singapore has built a system of transparency and trust. As best as they can, with all the knowledge of cutting edge research, they try to give the best to the patients.

Dr Toh claimed that they are the best at dealing with the Asian cancers which are probably a bit different in many aspects, for example in head and neck cancers. Therefore, when people come to see them, their care is as good, if not better than the west. For instance, 70% of all liver cancers in the world are diagnosed in Asia today. So, that means that they can treat liver cancer probably better than the west. So that is why people should come to Asia rather than the west for certain cancer treatment.

For cancers, the most important thing is called immune checkpoint inhibitors. That is an antibody that activates the T cells of the immune system to fight the cancer. But to be honest, it has been remarkable in the sense that since about almost ten years ago, there have been many approvals and many survival benefits shown by many large phase trials to show that immunotherapy can actually increase the survival rates. One of the most recent examples is actually the use of immunotherapy in colon cancer. It is better than chemo. In fact, it is increasingly becoming the first line of choice now a days. In a certain kind of cancer, even in solid tumour, in large studies, immunotherapy has replaced other forms of treatment. Liver cancer is an example.

Dr Toh said, "I treat liver cancer a lot, and immunotherapy is the first line of treatment for liver cancer now. So the world has changed from chemotherapy to immunotherapy for several cancers, and sometimes you combine immunotherapy with chemotherapy. So I think for solid tumors, that is the most promising thing."

Dr Toh informed that Asia has the most virus driven cancers. For example, hepatitis B and C. Surveillance is important. The question now is that if a person passed cirrhosis of the liver due to hepatitis B or C.

As we know, prevention is better than cure, Singapore is now approaching to cell therapy and cancer vaccine.



Prof Toh Han Chong, Senior Consultant and Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Strategic Partnerships) & Senior Consultant at National Cancer Centre Singapore

HAVE A NICE DAY

Rediscovering the beauty trend

DR RUBAUL MURSHED



It is said that "Face is the index of the mind and eyes are the mirror of the soul." Facial beauty is strongly linked to personality traits. Our personality determines how we react to a particular thing and respond to the surroundings along with our body language.

Scientists have published several hundred theories of aging, and have tied them to a wide variety of biological processes. But no one yet understands how to integrate all of this disparate information. Moreover, as we grow older, facial beauty starts to change. The only way one can be gracefully aged with beauty is by keeping inner beauty that covers attitude, and behaviour towards others.

Conventional beauty and smartness are not the same. Having good looks without an outlook can only get one to a certain stage in life. They might have a better first impression than others that tends to fade over time. But at the end of the day, they do not get moral pleasure and peace of mind.

Audrey Hepburn, the woman with a low voice changed the concept of western people towards beauty. Her style stands for modesty with elegance and nobleness with simplicity. Above all, when she was old, she devoted herself to fighting for the rights of underprivileged people with kindness.

"The beauty of a woman is not in the clothes she wears, the figure that she carries, or the way she combs her hair. It is not in a facial mode but seen in her eyes, because that is the doorway to her heart, the place where love resides. The beauty of a woman grows with the passing years" - Audrey said.

That is why, researchers said the results prove that people perceived as good-looking are more likely to give, and those who give are more likely to be perceived as good-looking.



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Lifesaving solution dramatically reduces severe bleeding after childbirth

STAR HEALTH REPORT

A trial of a set of interventions to manage postpartum haemorrhage, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, found a 60% reduction in heavy bleeding.

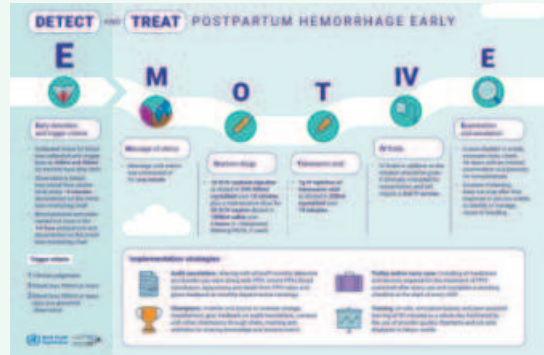
A new solution, known as E-MOTIVE, could provide a major breakthrough in reducing deaths from childbirth-related bleeding, according to a landmark study published today by researchers from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the University of Birmingham.

Postpartum haemorrhage (PPH) - defined as the loss of more than 500 mL of blood within 24 hours after birth - is the leading cause of maternal mortality worldwide. It affects an estimated 14 million women each year and results in around 70,000 deaths - mostly in low and middle-income countries - equivalent to 1 death every 6 minutes.

The study, which involved over 2,00,000 women in four countries, found that objectively measuring blood loss using a simple, low-cost collection device called a 'drape' and bundling together WHO-recommended treatments - rather than offering them sequentially - resulted in dramatic improvements in outcomes for women. Severe bleeding - when a woman loses more than a litre of blood after birth - was reduced by 60%, and they were less likely to lose their life.

There was also a substantial reduction in the rate of blood transfusions for bleeding, which is of particular importance in low-income countries where blood is a scarce and expensive resource.

Currently, a major challenge in responding to PPH is that it is often detected too late to respond effectively. Most providers use visual inspection



to assess bleeding, which tends to underestimate blood loss and can lead to life-threatening delays in treatment. When treatment is provided, this is typically done in a sequential manner with gaps between each intervention - costing more time if the first options are not effective.

The recommended E-MOTIVE package includes early and accurate detection of PPH using a blood-collection drape. This is complemented by an immediate treatment bundle where indicated, including uterine massage, medicines to contract the womb and stop the bleeding, intravenous fluid administration, an examination and, when needed, escalation to advanced care.

In the trial, the E-MOTIVE intervention was supported with an implementation strategy consisting of specific training, PPH trolleys or carry cases, engagement of local champions, audits, and feedback. All components of the E-MOTIVE intervention can be performed by midwives.

Obesity may increase cancer risk for those with BRCA mutations

STAR HEALTH DESK

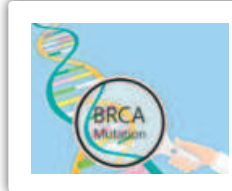
A recent study published in *Science Translational Medicine* aimed to investigate the impact of obesity on breast cancer risk in women with BRCA mutations. The researchers analysed breast tissue samples from 69 women carrying BRCA mutations and found that those with a higher body mass index (BMI) had a greater risk of DNA damage. Genetic studies revealed that obesity-related changes in gene expression were linked to DNA damage, with hormone pathways possibly playing a role.

To further explore these findings, the researchers conducted experiments using mouse models. They fed half of the mice a high-fat diet (HFD) and the other half a low-fat diet (LFD). The obese mice on the HFD exhibited similar biological changes in their breast tissue as women with a BMI over 25. These mice also experienced increased DNA damage and

developed mammary tumours earlier when exposed to cancer-promoting substances. While no significant DNA damage was observed in ovarian tissue, the fallopian tubes showed increased damage, potentially associated with ovarian cancer.

In conclusion, this study established a positive association between increased BMI and DNA damage linked to breast cancer risk in BRCA mutation carriers without a personal history of cancer.

Additionally, individuals who were not obese but had obesity-related markers, such as insulin resistance, may also face a higher risk. The research suggests that managing weight and addressing hormone pathways could be potential strategies to reduce the risk of breast cancer in women with high-risk genetic mutations. Moreover, the findings open the door to exploring the use of weight management medications in cancer prevention for this specific population.



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