



BOOK REVIEW Not to Stop Here: Inspiring stories of triumph over cancer

STAR HEALTH DESK

The book "Not to Stop Here: Narration by Cancer Survivors" in Bangla, published by the Centre for Cancer Care Foundation (CCCF) Bangladesh and printed by University Press Limited (UPL), contains inspiring stories from 42 cancer survivors, known as the Cancer Bravos. Released on World Cancer Day, February 4, 2024, the book features narratives from 16 males and 26 females who have triumphed over cancer, including Bangladeshi survivors residing abroad.

Edited by Rokhsana Afroze, Jahan-e-Gulshan Shapla, Sifat Arefin Pratik, and Dr Abu Jamil Faisal, the book took approximately a year to compile. Each survivor shared their journey through cancer diagnosis, treatment, often abroad, and their commitment to community service. The stories, written in Bangla, reflect diverse experiences and convey valuable lessons for current and future cancer patients. Contributors include Professor Shuvagata Chowdhury, Dr Sarwar Ali, Dr Sejuti Saha, Mosehuddin Shaker, Professor Nahid Rianon, Dr S M Shahidullah, Professor Khaleda Shah, and others from various backgrounds.

Despite facing different types of cancer, survivors share common themes of resilience and determination. The book sheds light on challenges faced by patients, such as disbelief in initial diagnoses, financial strain from seeking multiple opinions, and the need for better treatment planning in Bangladesh. However, stories also highlight successful treatment outcomes, emphasising the importance of optimism in cancer care.

In conclusion, "not to stop here" offers hope and inspiration, challenging the misconception that cancer is unbeatable. The Centre for Cancer Care Foundation advocates for government involvement in cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and palliative care, proposing the establishment of a Cancer Fund and encouraging collaboration among NGOs. Through collective efforts, it aims to improve cancer care and support for patients across Bangladesh.

Facing the global obesity crisis: A call to action for healthier futures

STAR HEALTH REPORT

A recent global analysis published in The Lancet reveals a concerning trend: more than one billion people worldwide are now living with obesity, marking it as the most common form of malnutrition in many countries. The NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) conducted the study, which looked at data from over 220 million people in 190 countries from 1990 to 2022.

The findings highlight a dramatic increase in obesity rates among both children and adults. Since 1990, obesity rates among children and adolescents have skyrocketed fourfold, while rates among adults have more than doubled. Over the same time period, there has been a decline in underweight people, mirroring this rise in obesity. However, despite this decline, underweight remains a significant issue, particularly in impoverished regions.

One of the most alarming aspects of the study is the sheer number of individuals affected by obesity. In 2022 alone, there were 159 million children and adolescents and nearly 880 million adults living with obesity worldwide. This staggering figure underscores the urgent need for action to address this global health crisis.

The implications of these findings are profound. Obesity and underweight are both forms of malnutrition that can have serious health consequences, ranging from cardiovascular disease to diabetes. As such, there is an urgent need for comprehensive policies aimed at addressing these issues.



Professor Majid Ezzati, the senior author of the study, emphasises the importance of improving access to healthy, nutritious foods as a crucial step in tackling both obesity and undernutrition. However, achieving this goal will require concerted efforts from governments, communities, and the private sector.

The study also highlights the impact of external factors such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and geopolitical conflicts on rates of malnutrition. These issues have the potential to exacerbate both obesity and underweight by increasing poverty and reducing access to nutrient-rich foods.

Despite these challenges, there

are glimmers of progress in some regions. In South and Southeast Asia, as well as parts of Africa, the double burden of malnutrition has declined, driven primarily by reductions in underweight individuals.

However, the rise in obesity rates, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, poses a significant threat to global health. Without immediate action, the prevalence of obesity is likely to continue to rise, placing further strain on already overstretched healthcare systems.

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the urgent need for action to address the global obesity epidemic. From implementing evidence-based policies to improving access to healthy foods, there is much work to be done to ensure a healthier future for generations to come.

HAVE A NICE DAY A lonely killer - Part II

DR RUBAIUL MURSHED

Isolation on an emotional and psychological level is a hallmark of loneliness. Some partners' inability to respect their partner's social standing manifests itself in numerous ways. One cause of isolation is treating other people poorly and putting them down. This behaviour prevents them from forming close connections where compromise on preferences and sentiments is possible. As a result, real closeness is lacking. They struggle to accommodate different opinions, whether about cuisine, movies, or ways of life. Even if they continue living together, the constant negative emotions stemming from this flawed outlook create a lonely existence at home, characterised by sadness, worry, and depression.

Has the rise of technology made people feel more isolated? Thanks to the Internet, people can stay in touch with loved ones and combat feelings of isolation and loneliness. However, research shows that when technology takes a different direction, such as with social media, it can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and disconnection. A greater number of people use social media when they are lonely. Contrary to expectations, however, social media use was associated with lower moods and did not affect their sense of belonging. It made them feel even more alone.

It is essential to distinguish between solitude and isolation or loneliness. The definition of isolation is a self-discipline that promotes health and enables deep introspection. Loneliness, on the other hand, is a condition of 'sadness,' where one feels alone even in the company of others. In contrast, solitude is the deliberate decision to spend time alone, doing nothing more than enjoying one's own company. It is more about being fully present with oneself than worrying about being alone. That is why it says that solitude is independence. Loneliness is the poverty of self; solitude is the richness of self.

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Celebrating sounds of success

Cochlear implant at BSMU event honours children's hearing journeys

STAR HEALTH REPORT

An innovative cultural event was recently held at the super specialised hospital of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), organised by the Cochlear Implant Group of Bangladesh and the Year Foundation, says a press release.

The event celebrated children who had regained their hearing through cochlear implants. The Minister of Social Welfare, Dr Dipu Moni, graced the occasion along with other dignitaries.

Forty children, once hearing impaired, but now able to hear - thanks to cochlear implants - shared personal stories of their journeys. Each child, equipped with cochlear implants, had the opportunity to experience sound, expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Dr Dipu Moni, the chief guest, emphasised the government's commitment to cochlear implant initiatives, considering them crucial for social welfare. She highlighted the annual allocation for such programmes,



PHOTO: COURTESY

distributed to centres according to their capacity.

Dr Moni acknowledged that, while most cochlear implants in the country are done with government support, families still face challenges in affording replacements if devices are damaged or lost. She proposed the establishment of a government fund to assist families in need, ensuring accessibility to replacement devices.

Furthermore, Dr Moni stressed the importance of societal support for families

incapable of bearing the full cost, suggesting a collaborative effort between government initiatives and community support. She underscored the need for a balanced approach where those capable bear the expenses while the state supports those in need.

The event commenced with a welcome speech by Professor Dr Mani Lal Aich Litu, Editor-in-Chief of the Cochlear Implant Group of Bangladesh and the Year Foundation, who highlighted the history and significance of cochlear implants in the country.

Artificial intelligence in improving infection control and responding to and preventing outbreaks

The European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ECCMID 2024), scheduled to be held in Barcelona from April 27th to April 30th, will feature discussions highlighting the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) in transforming infection control within hospitals. This discussion will be based on a press release issued prior to the congress on February 28th, underscoring the importance of integrating AI into infection control measures.


Dr Jonas Marschall from Washington University School of Medicine will present a case study during ECCMID, focusing on a vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus faecium (VRE) outbreak at Bern University Hospital in Switzerland.

Utilising network graph theory and graph neural networks, forms of AI, Dr Marschall and his team will analyse the outbreak's dynamics, identifying central locations for potential transmission and enabling targeted interventions like disinfection efforts.

Similarly, Prof Richard Drew from Rotunda Hospital in Ireland will discuss the role of AI in infection control during the congress. AI could assist in various tasks, from ensuring proper use of personal protective equipment by staff to optimising hospital cleaning procedures. Prof Drew will emphasise the importance of identifying institutional challenges that AI could address to streamline processes and improve patient care.

The press release highlights AI's potential to revolutionise infection control by enhancing the speed and accuracy of response to infectious disease outbreaks, potentially even preventing them altogether. It underscores the need for proactive integration of AI tools into routine practices and fosters staff engagement to effectively respond to infectious disease threats.

AI offers promising avenues for transforming infection control practices in hospitals, as discussed during ECCMID 2024. By leveraging AI technologies, healthcare providers can enhance response times, accuracy, and efficiency in outbreak management, ultimately improving patient outcomes and reducing the burden of infectious diseases.






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