



## Editorial Commentary

# Coming Full Circle: Concluding Remarks for the Special Issue on Psycho-Oncology in India

Mahati Chittem<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>Department of Liberal Arts, Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad, Hyderabad, Sangareddy, Telangana, India

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This special issue on psycho-oncology in India is the first ever compilation of scientific articles on this subject matter published in the country. This special issue showcases the wide range of research emerging in India—from detailing the psychosocial needs of people with cancer to the intersection of psycho-oncology and technology. Through review articles, empirical work, and perspective pieces, the reader is introduced to the scope of psycho-oncology research and practice within India.

There are several aspects of this special issue that are noteworthy. First, this issue includes six original articles, two review articles, and two perspective/oncology beyond science pieces. This is an apt mirror of the vast growth that this field has seen in the past two decades in India—there is so much evidence waiting to be published and here we are doing exactly that! Second, the editorial (or foreword) for this special issue is written by Prof. Phyllis Butow. Prof. Butow is a world-renowned psycho-oncology professional who made a big dent in the field through the sheer volume of work she has accomplished in her career. It is encouraging to read her editorial, which not only describes the past and present of the field but also offers the opportunity to imagine the future direction of our collective effort in psycho-oncology. Third, the bulk of *IJMPO*'s readership are oncologists and to be publishing a special issue to this group of astute professionals is a fantastic achievement in advocacy, improving patient outcomes and furthering an interdisciplinary scientific dialog. Indeed, it is a privilege and honor that the former editor, Dr. Padmaj Kulkarni, and current editor, Dr. Seema Gulia, enthusiastically and patiently supported the publication of this unique special issue. Fourth, the contributions to this special issue are from authors at various stages of their career. This is an important observation to make as it speaks to the potential, passion, and fresh perspective this can bring to psycho-oncology research in India.

Personally, this special issue feels like coming home to me. I left India to pursue my Master's and then PhD overseas wherein both my dissertation and doctoral thesis

were in psycho-oncology. The studies coming from Indian populations were so sparse at the time that I relied heavily on the broader Asian (mainly Japan and China) research in psychosocial oncology while writing up my work. So, when I returned to India in 2011 after my PhD was awarded, I came with the singular objective to add to psycho-oncology literature emerging from India. I was incredibly fortunate to be almost immediately recruited into IIT Hyderabad as a faculty in the Department of Liberal Arts. Here, I had the freedom to explore, conduct research, and publish on a range of topics in psycho-oncology. Our research group, the Health Associated Co-Operative and Supportive (HACOS) group, engage in several topics such as psychosocial needs of parents of children with cancer, sexual satisfaction in survivors of cancers of the reproductive system, unmet supportive care needs among people with cancer, patient empowerment, physician–caregiver–patient communication, improving the skills of nurses in psychoeducation, MedTech for better patient care delivery, and self-care for oncologists. Rooted in a multistakeholder perspective approach, our group works closely with oncologists, nurses, technicians, scientists, engineers, patients, caregivers, and communities. Given this, publishing the special issue is particularly close to my heart as it feels like our shared journey came full circle.

The structure of this special issue was imagined in a manner so as to provide critical insights into care delivery (e.g., Mukherjee et al describe at what time are psycho-oncology services sought after, suggesting how health care systems can design referral protocols), providing support to underserved groups (e.g., Namjoshi introduces the psychosocial care needs of children diagnosed with cancer and their parents), and the types of interventions that psycho-oncology can offer (e.g., Satish et al detail an RCT of an exercise intervention for a specific concern—cancer-related fatigue—which is experienced by people with cancers of the oral cavity). Following on from this, the special issue tackles how

Address for correspondence  
Mahati Chittem, PhD, Department  
of Liberal Arts, Indian Institute of  
Technology Hyderabad, Hyderabad,  
Sangareddy 502205, Telangana,  
India  
(e-mail: mahati@la.iith.ac.in).

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the pandemic impacted two major stakeholders in oncology care, that is, patients (here Menon et al use a niche group of people with reproductive cancers) and health care providers (here Siddiqui et al provide an important window into how the pandemic affected health care providers in the thick of the storm). Appreciating that cancer's psychological toll permeates to the family of caregivers and health care providers, we included Asha et al's article on how burnout and psychosocial factors interact among these groups. At this point, we wanted to pause and introduce a few distinctive aspects within psycho-oncology. Therefore, we included a perspective piece on survivorship that explores the unmet needs of people who survived oral cancer (Mitra), a review on the burden and disparity in care services in Nagaland (Pongener), and the need to harness spiritual care in India (Murthy). Finally, we wanted to wrap up this issue by examining the way forward for psycho-oncology research in India through Raqib and George's article on innovations in responding to challenges faced by the field in delivering care.

I hope that this special issue offers you a glimpse into not only the vastness of the scope for work in psycho-oncology

but also how far research in this field has come in India. It is humbling and inspiring that as a group, we have consistently and tirelessly ploughed on to contribute to the science and practice of psychosocial oncology in India. This special issue is also a call for more collaborative, multidisciplinary approaches to cancer care delivery. So, I hope that this special issue helps inspire us to work together toward improved, optimal oncology care experiences for patients, caregivers, and health care professionals.

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#### Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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