



Tata Memorial Centre Study validates Papaya Leaf Extract as a Low-Cost Solution for Chemotherapy-Related Low Platelet Counts

Landmark Indian Clinical Trial published in International Oncology Journal shows faster platelet recovery and fewer chemotherapy delays

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In a major advance for supportive cancer care, researchers from the GI Medical Oncology Department at Tata Memorial Centre (TMC), Mumbai, have shown that *Carica papaya* leaf extract (CPLE) significantly improves recovery from chemotherapy-induced thrombocytopenia, a common side effect of cancer treatment that causes low platelet counts and often leads to treatment delays.

The findings, published in JCO Global Oncology, the international journal of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), provide the strongest clinical evidence to date supporting the use of papaya leaf extract in cancer patients. The study is the first Phase III randomized clinical trial to demonstrate the benefit of papaya leaf extract in patients experiencing chemotherapy-induced thrombocytopenia.



Addressing the gathering, Dr. Vikas Ostwal, Professor, Department of Medical Oncology, Tata Memorial Centre, and Principal Investigator of the study, said, "Chemotherapy-induced thrombocytopenia is a common challenge faced by cancer patients across the world. Our study provides high-quality clinical evidence that papaya leaf extract can accelerate platelet recovery and help patients continue chemotherapy with fewer interruptions. Given its affordability and accessibility, this intervention could have particular relevance in low- and middle-income countries where access to expensive supportive care therapies remains limited."

Speaking at the event, Dr. Sudeep Gupta, Director, Tata Memorial Centre, said, "This landmark study reflects Tata Memorial Centre's commitment to conducting research that directly improves patient care. By evaluating a widely used traditional remedy through a rigorous Phase III clinical trial, our researchers have generated evidence that could benefit cancer patients not only in India but across the world. The findings highlight the importance of affordable, evidence-based innovations that make quality cancer care more accessible."

Chemotherapy is a cornerstone of cancer treatment but can temporarily suppress bone marrow function, leading to a fall in platelet counts. Low platelet levels increase the risk of bleeding and frequently force oncologists to delay treatment or reduce chemotherapy doses. Such interruptions can affect treatment outcomes and add to the physical, emotional and financial burden faced by patients and their families.

The Tata Memorial Centre-led study enrolled 219 patients with solid tumours who developed low platelet counts during chemotherapy. Participants were randomly assigned to receive either papaya leaf extract or a placebo in addition to standard treatment. The study found that patients receiving papaya leaf extract recovered platelet counts significantly faster, had fewer chemotherapy delays and dose reductions, were more likely to continue treatment according to schedule, experienced no major safety concerns related to the intervention, and benefited from an affordable and easily accessible supportive care option. The results indicate that papaya leaf extract may help patients remain on potentially life-saving cancer treatment without unnecessary interruptions.

Researchers believe the findings could pave the way for broader use of evidence-based, affordable supportive care interventions that help cancer patients complete treatment safely and effectively.

Papaya leaf Ayurvedic preparations have been used in India for decades, particularly for conditions associated with low platelet counts. However, scientific evidence supporting their use in cancer care has remained limited. The findings of this Phase III randomized clinical trial provide robust evidence supporting the use of papaya leaf extract as an affordable supportive care intervention for patients undergoing chemotherapy-induced thrombocytopenia.

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