

## Seeing through a patient with a brain tumor

The symptoms were innocuous to begin with. Sometime around in October, 2016 my father started trembling while walking and also began to have some problems with his memory, he used to forget what he wanted to say when he started to say something. He also started losing interest in things that he had liked such as reading and even cooking. Though we at home noticed it we somehow attributed it to symptoms of aging and didn't give it much thought or attention- not medical attention at least. Then towards the end of November his condition started deteriorating and that too at an alarming rate. On a daily basis his walking became rapidly unsteady, he started forgetting most of the things and worse even started losing his articulation. That is when the alarm bells started ringing loudly and I took him to various doctors including a neuro-physician. The neuro-physician suspected it to be a case of dementia and Parkinsons' and accordingly started treating him. But, apart from ameliorating some symptoms, such as shaking of hands and legs, the treatment didn't help his condition much. In fact, things deteriorated further as he could no longer do routine things like ablutions or taking a bath. He needed assistance even to move around in the house. We had to keep somebody to take care of my father as it became extremely difficult for us to do it all by ourselves. That is when it was decided that we would get an MRI scan done of his brain as it suddenly occurred to us in the family that he had been detected with a small tumor (meningioma) in 2012, which the doctors had then not considered a cause for immediate concern. What also made us make him undergo the MRI scan was the fact that his ability to speak had rapidly deteriorated and the right hand side of the body had become particularly weak and he was using his left hand for everything even for simple things like holding a cup. A little reading on the internet told us that this could happen if there is a tumor growing in the brain on the left hand side. And sure enough, the scan just confirmed what we had suspected. The tumor had grown sizeable and was growing on the LHS of the brain. The neuro-physician immediately recommended that we consult Dr. Shashank Joshi, a neurosurgeon.

We met Dr. Joshi and showed him the scan and the reports and he immediately suggested that we should get the tumor operated. That gave us some hope that may be a cure is in sight after all. Though to Dr. Joshi's credit he did not assure us that the symptoms of dementia and dysfunction of speech was related to the tumor, but explained that it could be a reason. And thus, despite my father's age (72 years) and the fact that he was diabetic, we as a family took a leap of faith and decided to get him operated. I will never forget the day he was getting operated (unless I suffer from dementia myself some day!), every minute was difficult to pass and there was a constant prayer on my lips. The surgery lasted for about 2 and ½ hours and it took him another couple of hours to recover from the anesthesia partially. Dr. Joshi informed us that the surgery has been successful in that the tumor was removed and we have to watch his recovery. Every minute and hour after that we just waited with bated breath and threw up our hands in celebration when he uttered his first words to my brother, still not fully out of the effect of anesthesia. We knew then (or at least I did) that he would recover. And this has been validated. It has been more than a month now since the operation and my father is now able to do all his daily chores, has regained his articulation and most of his memory. For me it is nothing short of a miracle.

I feel nothing but extreme gratitude to Dr. Joshi and his team of doctors, the doctors, nurses and other staff at Seven Hills hospital and the neuro-physician who we continue to consult for helping my father be where he is today. It is also extremely gratifying that Dr. Joshi has always been available to us on the phone. That is a big sense of support to us.

For those who are dealing with a similar situation- where a loved one is having a brain tumor I have just three things to say. One, it is important to get a good surgeon and hospital as anything can go wrong in such a surgery, especially given the age of the person. Two, surgery and treatment of this kind is expensive and everybody should have a medical insurance in place for such an eventuality. We were fortunate that we could afford it despite my father not having a medical insurance but this need not be the case with everybody. And finally, find some anchor that will keep you going and strength- in my case my faith in God was my anchor. Find yours.