Cancer Prevention; Emerging Infectious Diseases as Risk Factors, Iran Feature

In the previous issue I had a short note about cancer prevention and infectious diseases, discussing the feature in the EMRO countries.

The infectious agents play important role causing 26% of malignancies in developing countries. There is no precise data about the rate of infections as the main cause of cancers however, due to available data, there is clear evidence indicating the correlation of infectious agents and cancers which highlights the importance of the issue. For example the mean rate of Human Papiloma Virus (HPV) infection in the normal population is around 10% and between 40-90% in cervical cancer in different studies. This is less than the figures in other developing countries which may be attributable to the community behavior based on Islamic rules.

Ninety five percent of nasopharyngeal cancer patients are infected by EBV (Epstein Barr Virus) and 65% of cases with gastric cancer are affected by HP (Helicobacter Pylori) which is not too different from normal population infection (60%). The prevalence of HBV (Hepatitis B Virus) infection in Iran is less than 3% for youth and less than 40% for adult, which is attributable to community based vaccination integrated in national program which is the most cost effective project against cancer. This rate in the EMRO countries is around 86%.

It is well recognized that younger children infected by these agents have much higher rates of chronic persistent infections and reasonably more cancer involvement. Dr Bruntland, the ex-Director General of World Health Organization, in her report in 2000, stated that: "Two thirds of all disease in later life can be traced back to behavior patterns established during teenage years as to exposure to health threatening environments in childhood."

According to this idea, we as clinicians and health professionals should be determined to intervene to control cancer related infectious diseases at the right time and with the right approach as a part of the Comprehensive Cancer Control Program.

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