

## Moving forward with HOPE!



### Initial Diagnosis:

My journey with Multiple Myeloma started with a pain in my shoulders in 2018. Initially, thought it was due to overexertion and age, however, since it persisted, consulted a doctor in Kerala. It was initially dismissed as normal pain due to old age and was advised rest. However, the niggling pain continued.

In Nov 2018, while in Kolkata, for my wife's spinal surgery, since the pain had worsened, consulted the Neurosurgeon, Dr Sandip Chatterjee. He suggested an Xray, checked and asked not to neglect it and referred to an Orthopaedic Surgeon. The Orthopaedic Surgeon checked me up and since I did not have any further symptoms except for the bone pain, suggested an MRI and a few blood tests. Based on the results, he referred me to an Ortho-Oncologist. This was the first time that somebody had mentioned the possibility of the Big C. In fact, we were getting to know of the various specializations that exist within Oncology for the first time. The Ortho-Oncologist checked me up, spoke to me for a long time and since I did not have any other symptoms, he suggested the Cancer Marker tests. As each of the cancer marker tests came clean, one after the other, it brought renewed hope that everything was alright. However, the last test, i.e the Serum Immunofixation is where they caught it. Post that we were now referred to the Haemato-Oncologist, Dr M V Chandrakanth. He was extremely patient to explain what Multiple Myeloma meant and what the next steps would be. Given the situation, we decided to start the treatment immediately at Narayana Superspeciality Hospital, Howrah.

### Navigating the Treatment protocol

With the start of the Induction Treatment, the next few weeks were extremely difficult. However, over time got over the side effects. One of the medications, had an impact on me and I found myself in hospital for a couple of days. Over a period of time, things settled, and I continued with the treatment. In Feb, 2019, we moved back to Bangalore and was referred to Dr Santhosh at MSR – HCG. He was also extremely patient and kind and helped continue with the treatment. After 23 sessions, he advised going through the Stem Cell Transplant. This was yet another difficult phase. However, by Gods Grace and the support of all, went through the entire process in June 2019. It took a couple of months to regain the strength and normalcy. However, once the initial challenges were overcome, rest of the pieces fell in place. Post that, the routine medications and review sessions continued and is continuing till today.

### Gratitude:

Have a lot of people to Thank:

- Late Dr Sandip Chatterjee (was a Multiple Myeloma warrior himself who passed away in Oct 2024): If it hadn't been for his guidance, this wouldn't have been diagnosed early.
- Dr M V Chandrakanth & Team at NSH, Howrah: For all the support during the initial phase of the treatment
- Dr Santhosh & Team at MSR-HCG, Bangalore: For all the help, support, and guidance during the journey and until today
- My friends and family: for all the support through the ups and downs

**Lessons Learnt along the way – the 5 A's:**

1. **Assimilate** and understand the disease, protocol, and the way forward.
2. **Acceptance** of the situation and keep moving.
3. **Adapt** to ever changing situations without losing hope. Its not just about the physical aspects, equally important is to focus on the mental wellbeing.
4. **Ask** for clarity and support when needed.
5. **Appreciate** and celebrate milestones and be grateful.