

From apprehensions to relief — fighting tumour in Covid times

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By Anuja Susan Varghese

KOCHI: For almost 50 days, 34-year-old Meghna (name changed), a bank employee, spent anxious moments worrying over her health condition. Suffering from chest pain, and with medical treatment delayed due to the Covid-19 scare, a range of diseases from Covid itself to lung cancer, all crossed her mind, as she prepared herself for the worst. Post relaxations in the lockdown, when she finally got medical attention, it took doctors almost a week to diagnose a rare tumour, which thankfully turned out to be non-malignant.

Though Meghna, a native of Kottayam, had breathing difficulties and cough since 2015, the homoeo medications she took only moderated her suffering. “I didn’t know that the symptoms I felt were due to a tumour. I thought it was allergy and the symptoms subsided when I took homoeo medicines. This continued for nearly four years until last month when my condition worsened with severe stomach cramps due to heavy coughing and sleepless nights. Then I started coughing blood,” said Meghna, a mother of two.

Visiting a private hospital during Covid times and with symptoms closely related to Covid was filled with nervous moments. “I visited a private hospital near my home. They had me test for Covid, which turned out negative. A series of tests and X-rays followed, which finally revealed a growth in my lungs,” said Meghna, who was then referred to Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences in Kochi.

“I knew it was not Covid but I suspected cancer and prepared myself for the worst. My kids are very young -- only nine and six -- and I wanted to be there for them,” said Meghna. “We suspected cancer, but the biopsy report showed that the tumour was not cancerous. It took us almost a week to diagnose that she had inflammatory myofibroblastic tumour (IMT), which is very rare.

The tumour had grown from her lungs through the pulmonary veins and reached her heart,” said Dr Tinku Joseph, interventional pulmonologist at AIMS. A team comprising thoracic surgeon Dr Murugan P, cardiac surgeons Dr Praveen Varma and Dr Kiran Gopal, chief pathologist Dr Ajit Nambiar and cardiac anaesthetist Dr Avik Jayanth treated her. According to the doctors, the tumour was removed through various bronchoscopic and surgical procedures in three different stages.

“Kept away from my family due to the Covid restrictions, staring at the bleak lights in the hospital and not knowing what my disease was, I was devastated. My younger son would always ask for me, and we would keep in touch over video calls. I am so glad that

all those struggles are over,” said Meghna. The surgery took place on June 2 and Meghna is now happy to be back with her family again. “I am lucky that I did not have cancer. Now, the doctors have prescribed medicines to rule out even the tiny scope of the tumour growing. Everything now seems to be on the right track,” said Meghna.