

Medix survey uncovers Hong Kong's fear and confusion around cancer

Lack of knowledge on which preventive measures are essential, and a significant reliance on Google and family for additional advice, highlights the need for much more to be done to help educate citizens on the diagnostics, treatment options, technologies and lifestyle needed to tackle cancer

- Survey finds 75% of Hong Kong respondents are worried about being diagnosed one day with cancer, with 69% knowing at least one person in their close social circle who has been diagnosed. Despite this, only about a third undergo cancer related tests to prevent or diagnose the disease. For eg. Only 36% of women have pap smear/breast examinations, which is known to save lives.
- Knowing where to turn to for advice is another area of concern, with almost a third of respondents looking to Google (32%) and family/friends (31%) for additional advice after a diagnosis, rather than a family doctor (30%).
- Ensuring the best treatment is applied at the time of diagnosis is another area of concern, with less than half identifying the following as the singular most important step in the treatment of cancer: staging of the disease before deciding on treatment (13%); genetic testing of the tumour to match best treatment option (13%); and biopsy of the tumour in obtaining final diagnosis (13%).
- Currently, when it comes to treatment, nearly half (49%) combine conventional medicine with traditional Chinese; On the other hand, 85% of respondents would use advanced new technologies focusing on identifying the genetic makeup of the tumour to enable targeted, personalised cancer care, if made available.
- 78% are strongly interested and would seek for personal medical case management services should they be diagnosed with cancer (compared to 76% last year).

HONG KONG, CHINA--(Sep 27, 2018) – A new survey commissioned by Medix has uncovered a worrying trend across Hong Kong when it comes to the perception, diagnosis and treatment of cancer. Across every age group and gender, there is a clear fear of being diagnosed with cancer, yet a lack of sufficient screening and actions taken to prevent and early diagnose cancer. Further, confusion is seen over the best resource to turn to for advice on treatment, along with a strong desire for personal medical case management and access to new diagnostic medical technologies to obtain personalised, targeted treatment.

“What’s clear from the survey, and our own experience managing patients, is that people are missing the chance to save a Hong Kong life. It’s as simple as that,” said Sigal Atzmon, CEO, Medix. “Take breast cancer for example, in Hong Kong it is the most common cause of cancer and the third

leading cause of cancer related death among women, yet there is a worrying number of female respondents who do not have regular breast examinations of any kind.”¹

“There is a clear need here to re-address how everyone from the government to insurers and doctors help educate people on the importance of taking a preventative and early diagnosis approach.”

One of the most striking aspects of the findings is that they are very similar across the different age groups and genders. Take the initial steps after diagnosis, Google (32%) and family/friends (31%) are two of the most popular ways people seek advice, behind only seeing an oncologist (74%). When asked about how they would approach cancer for themselves or their family, there is a strong demand to obtain personal medical case management services (78%). Worryingly, only a few (13%) view undergoing a biopsy to obtain a final diagnosis as being the most singular important step in the cancer treatment journey. Additionally, only 13% consider staging of the disease the most important step before deciding on treatment. Both of these steps have proved to have a big impact on quality of care provided, medical outcomes, survival rates and cost of treatment if carried out on time.

The survey also showed that there is still a belief that Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) complements conventional cancer treatment, with nearly half (49%) of cancer patients having combined Western treatment with TCM.

“This is quite worrying as medical literature & research has indicated there can be potentially negative side-effects for the patient when combining conventional Western treatments with Traditional Chinese Medicine,²” said Professor David Zeltser, Global Medical Director at Medix. “For example, Asian Ginseng, is used in Chinese medicine to prevent cancer and restore strength. However, this induces the activity of CYP3A in the liver, which in turn reduces the effectiveness of many proven chemotherapy drugs. Physicians should be more proactive in obtaining a complete medication history, including herbal medicine use, when advising on suitable courses of treatment.”³

“This survey clearly shows that Hong Kong citizens need to change their attitude and approach to cancer. In our opinion, while there is strong awareness of the risks of cancer, people are not taking the right preventative measures until it’s too late. There is a lack of understanding about the best resources for information, and the first crucial steps on how best to tackle cancer. This means Hong Kong people are potentially pursuing treatments without receiving all of the right advice.”

Ms. Atzmon added, “Seeking personal medical case management once you have already started treatment could often be too late, when actually it should be the first thing that you do. This should be alongside a measured and smart approach to speaking to different specialists, undergoing a biopsy and staging of your disease. The desire to find out more about new technologies focusing on identifying the genetic makeup of the tumour and using them to enable targeted, personalised cancer care if available is promising and shows there is a consumer appetite for innovative and more personalised ways to tackle cancer.”

¹ <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/bf78/6f856db171441921cff015debc2175efb6fb.pdf>

² https://cancerforum.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Mar11_Table1_p19.jpg

³ <https://cancerforum.org.au/forum/2011/march/interaction-between-complementary-and-alternative-medicine-with-conventional-anti-cancer-medicine/>

Professor Zeltser said the survey results, coupled with Medix' deep understanding of specialised personal medical case management services, pointed to a very clear set of guidelines to better help Hong Kong people deal with cancer. These include:

- * *Conduct screening tests based on your risk profile and family history.*
- * *Insist on a biopsy and staging before starting treatment.*
- * *Seek additional opinions and apply a multidisciplinary approach.*
- * *Ask about new treatment options and genetic testing of your tumour to personalise your treatment plan.*
- * *Assess and evaluate before rushing into surgery or starting your treatment plan.*
- * *Consult an oncologist before combining TCM with Western Medicine.*
- * *Seek treatment at specialist medical and academic centres which have access to clinical trials – remember, famous doctors and private facilities are not always the best option.*

Further, Ms. Atzmon called on the HKSAR Government to take additional steps to better educate Hong Kong people about cancer prevention and treatment, improve accessibility to subsidised cancer screening tests and shorten waiting times for cancer treatment at public hospitals. "There is a pressing need for greater transparency and reporting on cancer treatment provided by the private sector as well," she added.

The survey was carried out with 500 respondents from a diverse background of income, age and gender. A presentation deck outlining the results in detail can be provided on request.

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About Medix Medical Services

Established in 2006, Medix is a global and leading provider of innovative, high quality, medical management solutions. With offices in London, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore and Tel Aviv, and a client base exceeding 3 million members in over 90 countries, Medix offers its clients -- primarily global health & life insurers, financial groups, large corporates and government institutions -- significant value-added services in the world of healthcare. Medix' team is comprised of 300 in-house doctors alongside nurses, research experts, medical admin teams and a quality accredited global network of over 3,000 specialists and 1,500 leading hospitals.

Medix is proud to provide its customers with proven better medical outcomes. For example, on global yearly average, Medix has changed the initial diagnosis in over 20% of the cases and improved treatment choices in over 43% of the cases. In Asia, these numbers are even higher. By doing so, Medix provides its customers with fast-track solutions to the right diagnosis and optimised treatment pathways. In over 55% of the cases unnecessary consultations, tests, treatments and procedures were avoided, which led to significant improvement in overall medical quality, efficiency and cost management.

Further, Medix also provides disease prevention management services, digital health solutions and medical governance services to insurers, large corporates and government institutions.

Medix is a Shared Value company that strives to enable people around the world to receive the best medical care possible while eliminating unwarranted healthcare variations and helping to control medical cost inflation. Believing that the accessibility, quality and sustainability of medical care are important components of social rights, Medix is very passionate about these issues and is globally fully dedicated to these activities.

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About Medix Medical Monitor Research

The Medix Medical Monitor Research was structured to investigate Hong Kong consumers' awareness and behaviour towards health issues and cancer. The research data was collected through computer-assisted web interviews of 500 people, who are health insurance policy holders aged 30 to 59 with average or above personal income. The quotas on gender, age, personal income and geographical coverage applied reflect the representation of the target consumers in Hong Kong. The research was conducted in August, 2018 by Kantar Millward Brown, a leading multinational market research firm.

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