City docs pull off life-saving surgery to remove tumor

Sumati Yengkhom | TNN

Kolkata: Day by day, Sushmita Sarkar saw death inch towards her as a 20-20 cm malignant tumor weighing about 5 kg ate into heart. Removing the tumor from the 53-year-old’s kidney was a risky process. It needed precision and expertise. And even if a small portion of the tumor got detached during the surgery, it could have travelled to other vital organs, posing a threat to her life.

Now, Sarkar is back from the jaws of death after undergoing a successful operation. The tumor was detected last May. Her family rushed her to Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai where the doctors suggested removal of the tumor. But the hospital asked the family to wait for a bed, as no bed was available. At the same time, they were warned that waiting for long could prove fatal for the patient as the tumor was spreading its tentacles towards the heart through the inferior vena cava, a vein that supplies blood to the heart. And, the patient could reach an inoperable stage very soon.

“We were in dire straits as Tata Memorial Hospital kept postponing the date for surgery, citing unavailability of bed or a vascular surgeon. Delaying the surgery meant approaching death. That is when we approached medical oncologist T Choudhury in Kolkata. He suggested that we see onco-surgeon Gautam Mukhopadhyay and that’s how we landed up at Ruby General Hospitals (RGH),” said Sarkar’s son Avik.

At RGH, a team of doctors, including Dr Gautam Mukhopadhyay and vascular surgeon Dr M B Das, got the surgery plan on track. The former primary school teacher was operated on 10 days ago. It was a long surgery that included mobilizing the kidney tumor and stopping blood supply to the heart for about 15 minutes by clamping the main vessels. The tumor was removed intact.

“It is a very rare case and a highly risky surgery. The tumor was malignant and highly aggressive. We had to be sure that it was removed intact. Even if a small portion got detached, it could travel to any part of the body, posing a threat to the patient’s life,” said Dr Mukhopadhyay, head of surgical oncology at the hospital.

Sarkar was discharged from the hospital on Monday. The family from Barrasat spent a little more than Rs 1 lakh on the surgery.

“We had lost hope when Tata Memorial Hospital kept delaying the date for the surgery. We are thankful to the hospital and the team of doctors for saving my mother’s life,” Avik said.