

CSR Initiative touch over 5,000 Lives in promoting mammography camps in rural areas in Maharashtra

Press Release

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Finolex Industries Limited (FIL) and Mukul Madhav Foundation (MMF) mark 10 years of collaboration in their ground-breaking women's healthcare initiative by promoting women's healthcare through biannual mammography camps in Pune. Since the initiative's launch in 2014, these camps have provided free cancer screenings to over 5,000 women from marginalized sections of society, continuing uninterrupted—even during the pandemic. In cases where abnormalities are detected, FIL and MMF provide thorough follow-up care and offer financial assistance for further treatment when required.

Early detection is crucial in the treatment of any cancer. Since 2014, 0.5% to 1% in approximately every 50 women in Ratnagiri have been identified with precancerous or cancerous conditions through mammography, colposcopy and Pap smear screenings conducted during health camps. Also, early treatment of vaginitis and cervicitis can significantly reduce the risk of developing cervical and vaginal cancers respectively. This crucial initiative has considerably decreased the likelihood of cancer development and progression.

This joint endeavour of MMF and FIL strives to empower women in rural areas to undergo mammography screenings, regardless of the stigma associated with such examinations. By providing support and encouragement, MMF and FIL have aimed to nurture a sense of independence among women in making informed decisions about their health.

This initiative offers a range of comprehensive medical services, including:

- Mammography, Sonography, Sono-Mammography, and Pap-smear tests
- Abdomen and blood tests (CBC, blood sugar)
- Gynaecological consultations
- Physician, dietician consultations and follow-ups

The journey began with the guidance of Prashanti Cancer Care, Pune, and Finolex Industries donation of a mammography machine to Chirayu Hospital, Ratnagiri, and was later moved to Parkar Hospital, Ratnagiri. Dr. Koppiker of Prashanti Cancer Care Mission introduced MMF to breast cancer awareness programs through their 2014 marathon for breast cancer awareness. In addition, the camps have been conducted twice a year, aligned with International Women's Day and Navratri, to maximize participation. After five years of consistent service in the region, the venue shifted to Walawalkar Hospital, Dervan, in 2019, ensuring wider access for women from the southern talukas of Ratnagiri District.

Expanding the Reach of Cancer Awareness and Detection in Pune

After observing the success of the cancer detection camp in Ratnagiri, where it became clear how crucial such initiatives are in preventing cancer, FIL and MMF were motivated to expand their efforts in Pune. In response to requests from various communities in and around the city, and after receiving numerous applications for support related to cancer treatment, in January 2023, FIL and MMF donated a mammography machine to Bharati Hospital, Pune. MMF has expanded its efforts by organizing awareness sessions and encouraging women from various communities to access these facilities at subsidized costs. FIL and MMF have also extended cancer care efforts by conducting oral cancer screening camps for contract workers, and supporting ASHA workers, ANM nurses with breast cancer awareness and self-examination training, in collaboration with Prashanti Cancer Care Mission, Pune. Starting January 2024, over 1,000 women have already benefited from these monthly mammography camps for Rag pickers, Ladies Police and their families, Self-Help-Groups, Women from urban slums.

Mrs. Ritu Prakash Chhabria, Managing Trustee of Mukul Madhav Foundation, states, "Our decade-long commitment to women's health has made a significant impact on thousands of lives across Maharashtra. We've not only provided free cancer screenings but have also focused on comprehensive women's health services, including gynaecological consultations and essential tests. We're proud to continue expanding our reach, from our initial efforts in Ratnagiri to our recent work in Pune, making a tangible difference in communities across Maharashtra. Our collaboration with healthcare professionals, including the initial guidance from Prashanti Cancer Care Pune, has been instrumental in the success of this initiative. As we look to the future, we remain committed to raising awareness about early cancer detection and improving healthcare access for women from all walks of life."

Mrs. Gayatri Pawar from Ratnagiri was one of the beneficiaries of the camp. She was detected with breast cancer in the camp and was guided by MMF for specialist consultation in Pune. Mrs. Pawar states "With FIL and MMF's support, I was referred to a specialist in Pune who recommended surgery and chemotherapy. However, due to financial difficulties, I was unable to proceed with the advised treatment. It was at this critical time that MMF stepped in once again, offering financial assistance for my surgery. With their support, I successfully underwent surgery and 15 chemotherapy cycles. Today, I am completely cured and living a healthy and happy life. I am deeply grateful for the timely intervention and support provided by FIL and MMF as quoted in 2016."

FIL and MMF team has demonstrated exceptional dedication by extending support beyond traditional aid. And actively reach out to marginalized communities, including rag-pickers, BAIF Development Research Foundation women, women working in post office, and other underserved groups, often overlooked by mainstream support. Bothe the organisations approach involves not only providing assistance but also genuine outreach, offering transportation, refreshments, and support. This strategy aims to empower individuals, encouraging them to bring their families and communities into the fold. By fostering awareness and building trust at the grassroots level, one person and one community at a time, the team is making a significant impact. The FIL and MMF partnership showcases the potential of private sector engagement in addressing critical healthcare needs. As FIL and MMF enter their second decade of collaboration, both organizations remain committed to improving women's health and raising awareness about the importance of early cancer detection.

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