

Business

# Over 5,000 Women Benefited: Finolex Industries and MMF Celebrate 10 Years of Cancer Detection Camps

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Pune, 30th October 2024: Finolex Industries Limited (FIL) and the Mukul Madhav Foundation (MMF) have successfully completed a decade of collaboration in their groundbreaking women's healthcare initiative. Since 2014, the partnership has provided free cancer screenings to over 5,000 women from underprivileged communities through biannual mammography camps in Pune and Ratnagiri, even continuing their services throughout the pandemic. This joint effort focuses on early detection of cancer, offering follow-up care, and financial assistance for treatment when necessary.

The importance of early cancer detection cannot be overstated, as it significantly improves treatment outcomes. Through mammography, colposcopy, and Pap smear screenings, 0.5% to 1% of the women screened in Ratnagiri have been diagnosed with precancerous or cancerous conditions. Moreover, the early treatment of vaginitis and cervicitis has helped reduce the risk of cervical and vaginal cancers, underscoring the program's critical role in preventing disease progression.

"Our goal is to empower women from rural and marginalized communities to prioritize their health," says Mrs. Ritu Prakash Chhabria, Managing Trustee of Mukul Madhav Foundation. "By addressing the stigma often associated with health screenings, we are helping women take control of their well-being. Through our partnership with healthcare professionals and institutions, we have been able to provide a wide range of services, including mammography, sonography, Pap smears, blood tests, and consultations with specialists."

The initiative initially began in Ratnagiri, supported by Prashanti Cancer Care, Pune, and FIL's donation of a mammography machine to Chirayu Hospital. In 2019, the screenings were relocated to Walawalkar Hospital, Dervan, to increase accessibility for women in the southern regions of Ratnagiri district. The camps, held twice a year during International Women's Day and Navratri, have seen increasing participation over the years.

Inspired by the success in Ratnagiri, FIL and MMF expanded their cancer detection efforts to Pune. In January 2023, FIL donated a mammography machine to Bharati Hospital, Pune, and the foundation began organizing monthly mammography camps for women from various communities, including rag pickers, policewomen, and those from urban slums. "More than 1,000 women have already benefited from these camps in Pune," Chhabria adds. "We have also been conducting oral cancer screenings and offering training on breast self-examinations to ASHA workers and nurses, in collaboration with Prashanti Cancer Care."

The impact of this initiative can be seen in the stories of women like Mrs. Gayatri Pawar from Ratnagiri, who was diagnosed with breast cancer during one of the camps. "I was referred to a specialist in Pune, but I couldn't afford the treatment," she recalls. "MMF stepped in to provide financial assistance for my surgery and chemotherapy. Today, I am cancer-free, and I am forever grateful for their timely help."

FIL and MMF's approach to healthcare goes beyond offering traditional aid. They actively reach out to underserved groups, such as rag-pickers, BAIF Development Research Foundation women, and post office workers, often providing transportation, refreshments, and other support to encourage participation. "Our efforts are about more than just healthcare," Chhabria says. "We're building trust and fostering awareness within these communities, one person at a time."

