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## Make cancer vaccine more affordable, says Nobel laureate

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Kolkata:** Cervical cancer vaccines should cost less to be more effective in lowering the death rate caused by the disease. Since 80% of cervical cancer patients were from developing countries like India, affordability of the vaccine would be the key in ensuring the success of the vaccine, said Nobel laureate Prof Harald zur Hausen, whose discovery of the human papilloma virus led to the development of the cervical cancer vaccine.

Now in Kolkata to deliver a lecture, Hausen felt more competition among manufacturers should help lower the price of the vaccine. The vaccine now costs Rs 3,300 in India. "We need a cheaper vaccine for India and several other countries. It is cheaper here than in Europe but I appreciate that it is still steep for the majority of patients. If more companies join the fray, the vaccine will cost less in the near future," Hausen said. Around 2,60,000 die of cervical cancer around the world every year. India gets 1,25,000 new pa-

tients each year and Kolkata was number two among the metros on the cervical cancer death list.

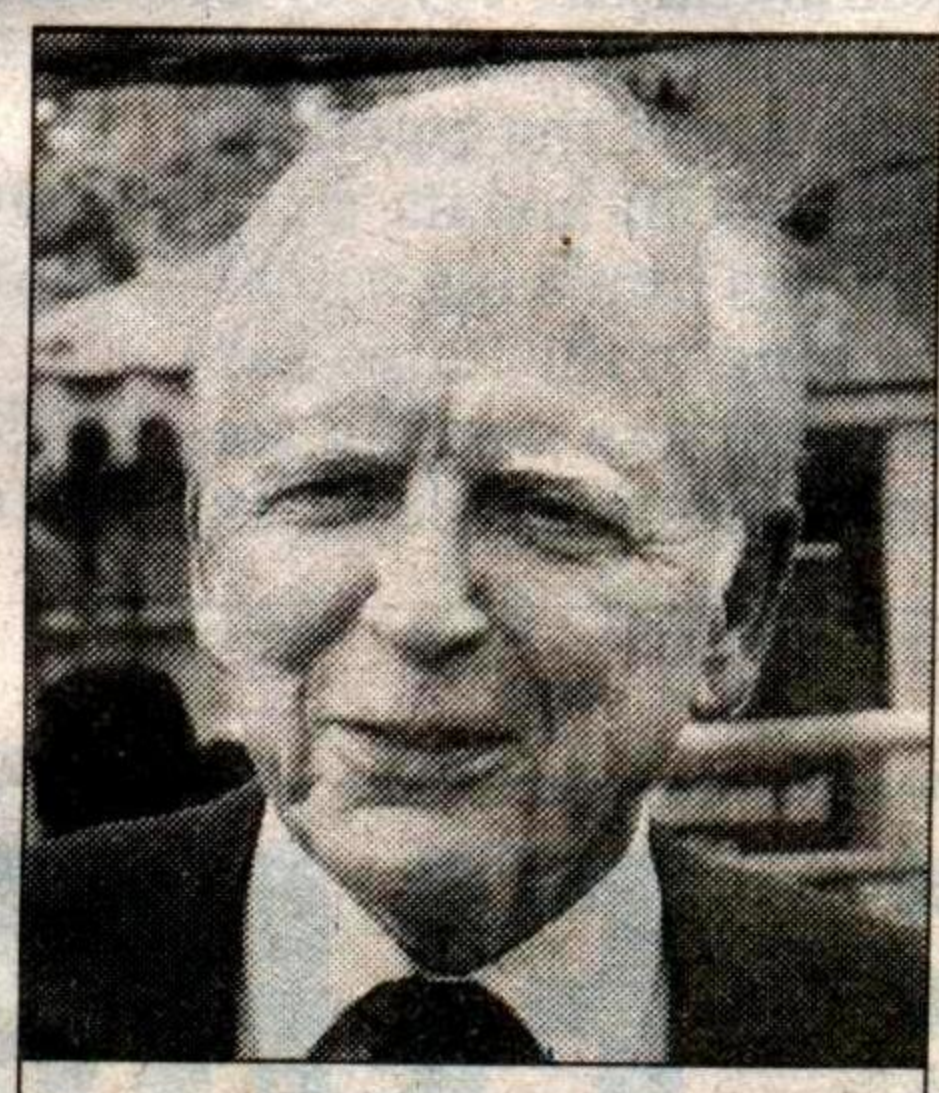
"Traditionally, rural areas have had more cervical patients but it's rising in the cities and Kolkata is among them," said M Siddiqui, chairperson of the Cancer Foundation of India, who addressed a press meet jointly with Hausen on Wednesday.

Asked what would be the right age for taking the vaccine, Hausen said it would vary from country to country and even from region to region. "Normally, it is advisable to get the vaccine before an individual turns sexually active" said Hausen.

Screening was still cheaper and an effective way of curbing cervical cancer but it was perhaps not applicable to a country like

India, said the Nobel winner.

"It is definitely cheaper and ideally more suited to India than a vaccine. But screening has to be really extensive to make a difference. I suppose it is difficult in India," said Hausen.



**"We need a cheaper vaccine for India and several other countries. If more companies join the fray, the vaccine will cost less in the near future"**

**Prof Harald zur Hausen**