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# 16-yr-old cancer patient juggles Std 10 board exams and chemotherapy sessions

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**S**ixteen-year-old Apeksha Patil gets up early every morning to travel from Mulund's Fortis Hospital to an exam centre at Bhiwandi to write her class 10 examinations. Once she is done, she returns to the hospital, where she tells her doctors and nurses how well she did during her chemotherapy sessions.

For all the stigma and trauma surrounding cancer, Patil is a shining example of the will power that is needed to battle it. Despite being detected with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL), a form of blood cancer, she is studying as hard as any of her classmates.

Apeksha's determination has won the hearts of all the doctors and

nurses treating her. "When she was diagnosed with ALL and I told her that she may need to get admitted, the first thing she told me was that she wanted to appear for her exams," said hematologist Dr Subhprakash Sanyal.

"The hospital is also trying to raise funds for Apeksha's treatment and further studies," he added.

According to Dr Sanyal, Apeksha was brought in last month with symptoms like weakness and low grade fever which she had had for several weeks. Blood tests showed a very high leukocyte count, hinting at blood cancer. A bone marrow examination confirmed that Apeksha had ALL.

"The patient needs to be admitted during initial sessions of chemotherapy as tumour cells often burst, so the patient needs to be under constant observation and on a saline drip," ex-



PRASHANT ANKUSHRAO

**Apeksha Patil at Fortis Hospital**

plained Sanyal, adding that he had worked out Apeksha's treatment schedule as per her exam timings.

For Apeksha, it is a battle that she wants to win anyhow. On Thursday,

she appeared for her Geometry paper. "I had studied hard for the exams. I just did not want to waste a year," said the teenager, a student of Parshuram Taware High School in Bhiwandi. "I feel a bit weak, but I know I will manage to appear for all the papers. As it is I don't have anything to do in the hospital room. So all I try to do is study," said Apeksha, who leaves the hospital room at 9.30 am and comes back by 3.30 pm. Her uncle drops her to the centre in his car.

Not surprisingly, Apeksha's mother Vinita wants her to grow up to be a doctor. "I want her to take up science and become a doctor. She is my pillar of strength."

Apeksha, who lost her father a few years ago, gets all the support she needs from her family. "My brother-in-law has taken up our responsibility. I want Apeksha to study hard and do very well in life," said Vinita.