

URBAN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE PROJECT

Patients content with care provided by centres

IMRUL HASAN

Laila Akhtar, a housewife with her newborn, expressed her satisfaction with the services at the post-operative unit of a City Maternity Centre (CMC) of Urban Primary Health Care Project (UPHCP) at Bashbari Road, Mohammadpur.

"My family and I have been utilising the services of the clinic for the last two years and are quite content with it," she said. "The services are good and charges are quite low and affordable," she added.

Like Laila, a large number of city dwellers, especially women and children in areas under the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) are getting health facilities from 105 health and 16 maternity centres of UPHCP.

The first phase of the UPHCP that started in 1998 ended on 30th June 2005. Preparations for the second phase are underway.

Most of the newly constructed city health care centres were handed over by June 12, 2005 to partner organisations like Marie Stopes Clinic Society (MSCS), Bangladesh Women Health Coalition (BWHC) and Population Service and Training Centre (PSTC).

The project is implemented at a cost of Tk 274 crore. The Asian Development Bank (ADB), UNFPA, Nordic Development Fund (NDF) and the Bangladesh government are providing the funds, said a high official of UPHCP.

All the city health and maternity centres together with Marie Stopes' 31 satellite clinics in the city's partnership area (PA)-6 have been operating quite efficiently, he added.

"Our aim is to improve the health status of the urban poor, particularly women and children, by improving access and changing methods by which health services are currently provided in the city," said Dr Md Shafiqul Islam, project manager of UPHCP, PA6.

"From July to September 2005, the project has provided services to a total of 41,556 patients. It also had 623

successful deliveries," he said.

UPHCP officials said that two kinds of health centres have been set up under the project -- Comprehensive

Reproductive Health Care Centres (CRHCC) and Primary Health Care Centres (PHCC).

"The PHCC takes care of patients with

fever and colds while the CRHCC caters to gynaecological problems and surgeries and provides both indoor and outdoor facilities," said Dr. Shahnaz Pervin, PHCC's clinic manager at Salimullah Road, Mohammadpur.

The centres dealing with child and maternal health care, communicable disease control, limited curative and general health care, family planning and behaviour change communication, have seen an impressive turn out of patients.

The CRHCC at Bashbari, Mohammadpur is continuously crowded with patients.

"At least 200-250 patients come here everyday. Our main objectives are keeping the centre neat and clean and to behave cordially with patients. That is why many patients who visit us are bound to come back and stay with us," said Dr Mizanur Rahman, clinic manager, city maternity centre at Mohammadpur.

"I come here twice a month for my check up. I am very satisfied with the facilities here," said Sharmin Khatun, who visits the CRHCC at Hazaribagh for gynaecological care.

"More clinics as these should be set up in different areas of the city so that people can have easy access to good health services at hand," said Rasel Ahmed, from Lalbagh about the PHCC at Salimullah Road in Mohammadpur.

The aim of the project is to provide service in two ways -- health centre-oriented service and satellite session out reach.

"Under this project, people with a monthly income of less than Tk 2,000 are issued a red card, valid for one-year," said Dr Parvin.

"The cardholder gets health services free of cost. Those who earn between Tk 3,000 4,000 every month get green cards for one year and can avail all types of health services with a discount of 20 per cent discount," she added.



Patients arriving at a health care centre of UPHCP at Mohammadpur.

DNA TESTING LABORATORY

A new chapter in solving criminal cases

SHARMIN MEHRIBAN

The recently commissioned DNA testing laboratory in Dhaka has opened up a new chapter in solving criminal cases by generating DNA fingerprints, also called DNA profile, of persons from any trace of biological samples such as blood, semen, saliva, urine, hair, teeth, bone and tissue.

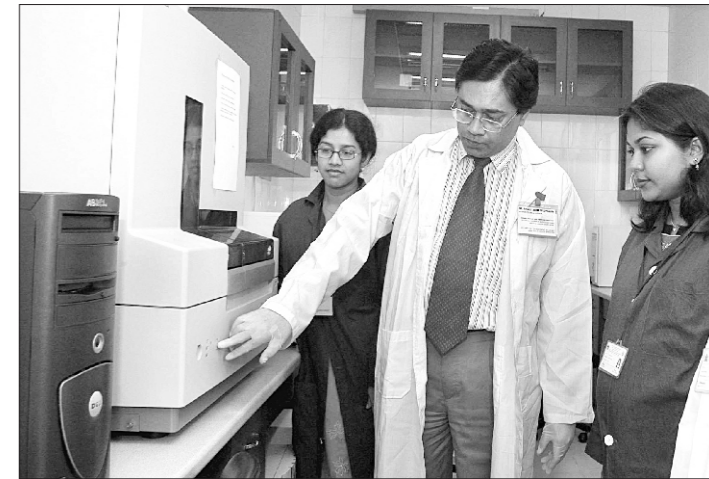
This will make it easier to pin down criminals and also settle paternity disputes.

A DNA or Deoxyribonucleic Acid profile can be concisely called the genetic photograph of an individual. A single human cell contains a nucleus. The nucleus, in turn, contains chromosomes made of DNA.

"Everyone's DNA has a 99.9 percent similarity and a 0.1 percent difference. It is this difference that is extracted in this lab through DNA profiling," said Sharif Akhteruzzaman, national technical advisor at the National Forensic DNA Profiling Laboratory at Dhaka Medical College (DMC) and associate professor at the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at Dhaka University.

The Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA) in Denmark financially assisted the laboratory, situated on the DMC premises. It has three sections -- screening, DNA extraction and DNA analysis.

Every section has two scientific officers and two lab technicians. The scientific officers are biochemistry graduates while the technicians have diplomas in medical technology. None of them however have any training in DNA testing and so they will go through a few weeks of evaluation in February. "The education of the scientific officers is enough for conducting such tests," said Akhteruzzaman.



When a crime is committed, samples like clothes or bed sheets are taken to the screening section to be checked for any biological traces like blood, saliva or semen. At the DNA extraction section, the DNA is extracted from the biological traces through various techniques.

The extracted DNA is amplified or copied by means of a PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) technique in which it is placed in a certain device. The device repeatedly raises and lowers the temperature of the DNA and consequently the DNA copies itself so that there is enough of it to be tested. Finally it is taken to the DNA analysis section where the DNA profile is created through a DNA analyser.

In criminal cases like murder, rape, theft or burglary, a comparison is made between the samples recovered from the crime scene or victims with the blood sample taken from the suspects. The DNA can be extracted from saliva or scratches on a victim's body or skin tissues in the victim's nails.

The suspect whose DNA matches the profile obtained from a biological sample recovered from a crime scene or victim is positively

identified as the culprit. However, the use of DNA analysis in such cases depends solely on the availability of biological samples at a crime scene.

In cases of disasters such as plane crashes or explosions where the victims' bodies cannot be identified, the DNA profile of tissue samples of the victims are compared with that of their close relations to confirm their identity. Even toothbrushes and combs used by the victims can be used to create their DNA profile.

In cases of paternity testing, the DNA pattern of the mother, child and the alleged father are compared as a child inherits DNA from each parent equally. "Blood testing alone cannot confirm the paternity of an individual," said Akhteruzzaman.

It can also be used to settle disputes during immigration and inheritance to confirm that the people travelling abroad are the genuine parents, siblings and children of an immigrant or the genuine heirs to a family property.

Currently there is no legislation to keep DNA records of every citizen nor is there any legislation to keep a DNA record along with a birth registration of a child.

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