

Video Assisted Thoracic Surgical Technique to Close the Hole in the Heart

For the First Time in the World at the BM Birla Heart Research Centre, Calcutta

On 30th of December 1995 we operated on a 19-year old girl from Bangladesh suffering from a hole in the heart. The entire operation was done through a key hole. The greatest advantage of this operation is a small scar which should not have any of the stigma attached to a heart operation. We are driven by the social problem of unmarried girls having to undergo heart operation with a long scar in the middle of the chest. We feel this technique would help these girls to have the operations without the social stigma.

Dr Devi Shetty
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these cannulae are in position, heart was connected to the heart-lung machine to take over the circulation. Then a small incision was made on right side of the chest under the natural breast fold and a three-chip camera was inserted inside the chest cavity to visualise the heart.

This gave a magnified image of the heart on the TV screen which was mounted in front of the patient. Looking at the heart on the TV screen, modified surgical instruments were inserted into the chest through this small incision and the operation was done to close the hole in the heart. Once the procedure was over the patient was gradually weaned from the heart-lung machine. The subsequent recovery was very smooth.

The greatest advantage of this technique is that these young ladies are left behind with a very small scar which is so small that after 4-5 months, there will be hardly any evidence of heart operation. And because there is only one cut on the heart instead of 4 or 5 cuts in the

traditional operation, the patient's recovery from the operation is very smooth. Due to this reason, the patient's stay in the hospital is shortened thereby reducing the over all

cost of operation.

At the moment we, at the BM Birla Heart Research Centre, are using this technique only for closing a simple hole in the heart called

Atrial Septal Defect. However, we are optimistic that this technique can be eventually used for performing complex heart operations. This experience of ours, was presented by displaying the video cassette of this operation at the International Conference in Madras recently, which was well attended by renowned cardiac surgeons from all over the world with similar interest. This was the first time in the world our surgical team has been successful in performing open heart surgery through a key hole. A large number of centres in Western countries have shown keen interest in repeating the same procedure in their institutes. Like laproscopic gall bladder surgery revolutionised the abdominal operations, we feel that this technique of Video Assisted Thoracic Operation would revolutionise heart operations.



Scabies: The Cure and Prevention

by Dr Nasir Uddin Ahmed

It is a very usual picture in our daily life to see a poor woman with a baby in her lap begging for some food or money. The baby is having papules, vesicles, pustules and pustular ulcers in different parts of the body like head, neck, palm, sole or sometimes all over the body.

Besides these, the woman may be scratching her web of finger, wrist, breast, axilla, lower abdomen due to intense itching. Even she may scratch over her genitalia and buttocks subconsciously while talking to others. All the above conditions are due to a very contagious skin disease called scabies.

All living groups should be treated simultaneously with the patient to prevent the occurrence of infection. The treatment of scabies are applied to the whole skin surface apart from the head and neck is a lotion or cream such as 25 per cent, Benzyl benzoate, one per cent Lindane, Permethrin or Crotamiton etc. Antihistamines or Salicylates are helpful to prevent the itching. If bacterial superinfection is significant, we may use antibiotics.

We may think that scabies is a negligible disease. But we should all bear in our minds that scabies may be a leading cause to kidney damage. So, it must be treated as soon as possible. We know that prevention is better than cure. Scabies can be prevented by maintaining a good hygienic habit. Cleanliness of the body, clothing, beds and surroundings are essential. Personal hygiene is very important to maintain specially in an institutional area. The writer is lecturer at Dinajpur Medical College.

Giving the World's Cities the Transport They Need

by Rupert Butler

WITH forecasts of major growth in population, towns and cities worldwide must develop fast, effective, environment-friendly transport systems. Neglect will mean declining health standards, increased road accidents and severe environmental damage.

As for central and eastern Europe, lack of transport policy and unchecked growth of the car was leading to an overall disaster area. These warnings were sounded recently at Transport in the Sustainable City, a seminar of transportation and environmental specialists held at the University of

London. It was organised by the UK Committee of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNED-UK) — an organisation backed by a mix of public funds, private trusts, British industry, the voluntary sector and trade unions. High on the agenda of the seminar were British proposals and measures on transport congestion. These included the continuing revival of trams for public transport either inside cities or on main approach arteries and the total removal of cars altogether from city centres. A widespread of the issues that emerged from the conference will figure prominently at a forthcoming international UN conference, the city summit, to be held in Istanbul in June. Attended by representatives from 185 countries, it will be the second United Nations conference on human settlements (habitat II). Main preoccupation will be looming problems on urban population growth. The main speaker at the London seminar was Dr John Whitelegg, a specialist on transport and environmental issues. He pinpointed the evils of the unrestricted use of motor and air transport — large lumps of metal rushing around on the ground and visible in the sky. As well as good public transport, Dr Whitelegg called for cities providing facilities for walkers and cyclists and the end of car use for short journeys. London Press Service

1996: International Year for the Eradication of Poverty

Amid plenty the number of poor people is growing. Today one in every five people suffers from debilitating poverty. Reaffirming the fact that the eradication of poverty is fundamental to reinforcing peace and achieving sustainable development the General Assembly of the United Nations, through its resolution 48/183 of 21 December 1993, proclaimed 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty.

Poverty Perspectives

The half-century since the creation of the United Nations in 1945 has witnessed an unprecedented growth in prosperity, with global GNP (output in goods and services) increasing sevenfold and per capita income more than tripling. During this period, great strides have also been made in alleviating poverty worldwide.

Despite a growing world population, the proportion of poor has actually declined, from 32 per cent in 1985 to about 25 per cent in 1995, according to World Bank figures.

Developing countries' growth rates — averaging 4.5 per cent in 1995 — will generally continue to outstrip those of industrialized countries, at 2.5 per cent. Two of the world's most populous countries are enjoying economic expansion: China's economy has been growing at an annual rate of about 12 per cent since the late 1980s, while India has recorded nearly 5 per cent annual economic growth for the past decade.

Yet these gains have not been spread equally. Even amid plenty, the number of poor people is growing. Today one in every five people suffers from debilitating poverty. The gap between rich and poor is widening, both within countries and between developed countries and many developing countries, especially the least developed countries (LDCs).

A Complex Problem

Poverty is a complex multidimensional problem with origins in both the national and international domains. There is no simple or uniform answer. Rather, country-specific programmes to tackle poverty, as well as the parallel process of creating a supportive international environment, are crucial to solve this problem.

The eradication of poverty and hunger, greater equity in income distribution and human resource development remain major challenges everywhere. They are the shared responsibility of all countries.

Measuring Poverty

Poverty has traditionally been measured in terms of the income or expenditure level that can sustain a minimum standard of living. Most countries have adopted national "poverty lines" in terms of house-hold income, and monitor the number of people who fall below that threshold.

"Absolute Poverty" on a global scale was estimated in 1990 by the World Bank, using a criterion of \$370 per person per year. Using this standard, it estimated that there were about 1.1 billion in developing countries living in absolute poverty. Today that number is estimated at 1.5 billion and includes the poor in developed countries as well.

"Relative Poverty" recognizes that poverty is not just

a matter of bare survival but also constitutes a minimal standard of living as measured by the community in which one lives. In some European countries, for example, the poverty threshold is set at one half the average national income.

The Human Development Approach goes a step further, acknowledging that eradicating poverty is more than a matter of increasing income to purchase market goods and services. It uses additional criteria, including infant mortality, life expectancy, nutrition and health, access to clean water and sanitation, literacy and other aspects of human existence that affect the overall quality of life.

Conquest of Poverty

Poverty is not a "given". Rather it is a blight on humanity that its existence jeopardizes that most basic of human rights — the right to survival.

Poverty is inseparably linked to lack of control over resources, including land, skills, knowledge, capital and social connections. It imprisons individuals and, in a wider context, poses one of the gravest threats to society, undermining political stability, social cohesion and the environmental health of the planet.

Poverty and peaceful development are incompatible. Taking up the challenge to eradicate extreme poverty is

an expression of growing confidence on the part of Governments and the international community that it can and should be done.

Facts about Poverty

Despite growing abundance, the last three decades have also been characterized by increasing poverty. For example:

- Every minute of every day, approximately 50 babies are born into poverty.
- Of the 5.7 billion people in the world, 1.5 billion are desperately poor and the number is increasing by approximately 25 million a year. According to UNICEF, it will quadruple within a single lifetime if current economic and demographic trends continue.
- Whereas the income ratio between the richest 20 per cent and the poorest 20 per cent of the world's population was 30:1 in 1960, it had increased to 61:1 by 1991.
- Twenty per cent of the world's population survive on a daily income of less than \$1.
- Today one billion of the world's poor live in rural areas, but by the year 2005 every second person will live in cities or towns, bringing about a growing "urbanization of poverty".
- The majority of the world's poor are women. Children and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as indigenous peoples, the disabled, the

elderly, refugees, migrants and the long-term unemployed, are most susceptible to poverty.

In developing countries, over 95 million children under the age of 15 are estimated to be working to help their poverty-plagued families, while an equal number are estimated to be homeless, destitute "street children".

Over 120 million people are officially unemployed and many more are underemployed. Many young people, even those with formal education, have little hope of finding productive work.

Perimeters of Poverty

Pockets of poverty exist even in the most affluent countries. However, entire countries can also be shackled by poverty. The most acute problems are in developing countries, in which more than a third of the entire population lives below the poverty threshold.

Least Developed Countries (LDCs): Many of the world's poor live in the 48 least developed countries (LDCs). The UN's original 1971 list of 25 LDCs has now swelled to 48.

South Asia: The largest concentration of severely impoverished people — about half the world's total — lives in South Asia (i.e. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Nepal), which is home to 21 per cent of the world's overall population.

Africa: Fully half of all Africans are impoverished. As a continent, Africa has 16 per cent of the world's poor, most of them (60 per cent) in rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa.

Economies in Transition: Countries in transition to a market economy (e.g. former Soviet Union Republics and Central and Eastern European countries) have experienced grave, inflation-aggravated economic problems. Especially hard hit are people formerly protected by comprehensive social safety nets that no longer exist (e.g. the elderly, women and children).

OECD Countries: Although in World Bank terms OECD countries have only 1 per cent of the world's poorest people, over 15 per cent of the population now lives below the national poverty line in both the United States and Western Europe. With joblessness increasing since 1960, there are some 34 million unemployed in developed countries today; in European Union countries alone, there are an estimated 52 million poor, 17 million unemployed and 3 million homeless.

struggle against poverty is simultaneously a struggle for human dignity, sustainable development and peace.

From a Day...

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty: 17 October

On 17 October 1987, 100,000 defenders of human rights from all walks of life

joined together on the Plaza of Liberties and Human Rights, Trocadero, Paris — the site of the 1948 signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — to "pay homage to the victims of hunger, ignorance and violence... [and to] affirm their conviction that human misery is not inevitable."

Extreme poverty: "a condition so limited by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, squalid surroundings, high infant mortality, and low life expectancy as to be beneath any reasonable definition of human decency"

— Robert S Mc Namara
Former President, World Bank

From the Declaration of the World Summit for Social Development Copenhagen, Denmark, March 1995

To National Targets... The Social Summit Declaration commits Governments to put in place policies geared to eradicating absolute poverty by a target date to be specified by each country in its national context. At the end of 1996, the General Assembly will evaluate progress made by Governments in meeting their commitments to establish national targets and policies to eradicate poverty.

To a Year... International Year for the Eradication of Poverty: 1996 In 1994 the General Assembly proclaimed 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty.

To a Decade Decade for the Eradication of Poverty: 1997-2006 It is expected that, following the International Year, the General Assembly will proclaim 1997-2006 as the Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. — Father Joseph Wresinski International Movement ATD Fourth World

Its objective is to create "a greater awareness of the fact that the eradication of poverty is... fundamental to reinforcing peace and achieving sustainable development" and to catalyze concrete actions resulting in a "distinct and significant contribution to the efforts to eradicate poverty" (General Assembly resolution 49/110, 1994).

To Solemn Commitments... The World Summit for Social Development: In 1995 leaders of 117 nations pledged that their countries would eradicate poverty, promote full employment and foster stable, safe and just societies.

Commitment 2 "We commit ourselves to the goal of eradicating poverty in the world, through decisive national actions and international cooperation, as an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind."

A Growing Awareness Eradicating poverty entails more than expanding GNP: it is a complex process embracing economic factors like creating jobs, as well as non-economic factors such as meeting basic needs, respect for human rights and popular participation in the development process itself. The

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The World Summit for Social Development expanded the context of poverty eradication to encompass such factors as access to basic services and amenities, productive employment and sustainable livelihoods, a sense of human security, the reduction of inequalities, the elimination of discrimination and participation in the life

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