

WORLD CANCER DAY

Making children stand against cancer

MD RAJIB HOSSAIN

Many people of our country believe that cancer is fate — just something that happens to them if they are unlucky. They believe that they have no control over their chances of developing cancer.

In fact, more than one-third of all cancer cases worldwide — almost four million cases each year — can be prevented if we act on what we already know and apply that knowledge in our daily behaviour. Tobacco use, diet, nutrition and exercise, sun safety and vaccination against cancer-causing viruses — all play a role in influencing cancer risks. Simple changes in lifestyle are enough to curb cancers. World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that 40 percent of all cancers are preventable.

Building awareness from childhood

World Cancer Day is an annual event being observed today (4th February) around the world. This year, World Cancer Day focuses on cancer prevention campaign entitled "Today's children, tomorrow's world". The aim of the campaign is to scale up awareness of

what we can do to prevent cancer and to change people's behaviour under that light.

Healthy habits established early in lifetime have a significant impact in later years. Behaviour is usually formed before adolescence. The environment in which children grow up at home, school and in the community powerfully influences their behaviour later on, whether this regards tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke, diet and physical activity, or smart behaviour in the sun. For all these reasons, the "Today's children, tomorrow's world" campaign will focus on the young.

Parents have a key role in influencing healthy habits in their children. We need to help parents to understand the long-term benefits of a healthy lifestyle and to engage them as partners in cancer prevention activities that start early in life.

From a prevention perspective, there is strong justification for focusing the campaign on four main cancer-causing factors:

- (1) tobacco and tobacco-free environments
- (2) diet, alcohol and exercise
- (3) preventing infections that may cause cancer; and
- (4) being sun smart.



WHO PHOTO

The campaign message globally consists of four key precepts:

1. Provide a smoke-free environment for children ("no smoking at homes or public place")
2. Encourage an energy-balanced lifestyle (regular physical activity and low-fat diet, avoid obesity)
3. Learn the facts about vaccinations (Hepatitis B Virus and Human Papilloma Virus)
4. Teach your children about harmful effect of exposure of excessive sunray.

Bangladesh: Cancer signals

There is not adequate statistics of the number of cancer patients in our country. A report by an NGO revealed that about 1,000,000 people are affected by cancer in Bangladesh and this number increases a staggering 200,000 every year. Out of these cancer patients 150,000 die annually. Recently in a seminar, the

eminent paediatricians from home and abroad told that 80 percent of the cancer affected children in the world are being getting cured through proper treatment while the scenario of Bangladesh is different.

They also said that there is one cancer affected child out of 600 children under 15 years in Bangladesh and if we could ensure proper treatment for the children, they might become cured.

But the treatment options for both adult and child are far behind the need. Lack of training, advance technology and facilities, lack of organisation are widely prevalent in the country which are making the cancer treatment difficult.

Misdiagnosis and maltreatment are also common. Current cancer treatment facilities of both private and the public sector can only serve 15,000 of these patients. A minority of the population can afford going abroad for treatment purpose. Treatment facilities of rest of the population remains in question. The lower- and middle-income group who cannot afford have to find facilities within the country.

Most often cancer is a fatal disease. It needs expensive medicine and long term therapy. It

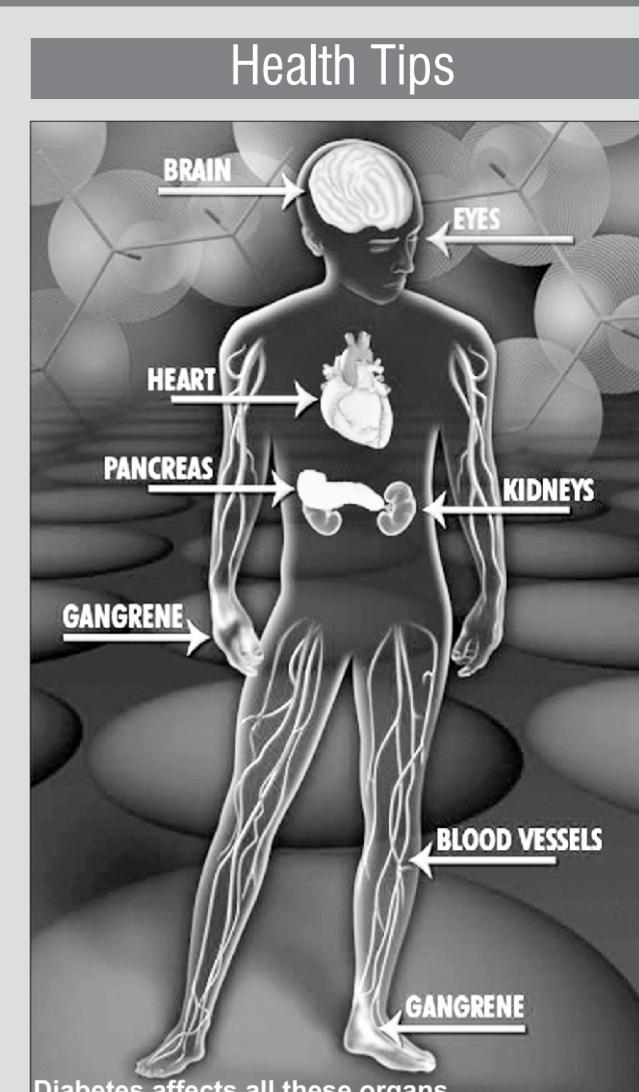
can cripple a person as well as his/her family.

It is a matter of great regret that there is no completely equipped and standard cancer care center in the country. So it is very important to take necessary strategy to prevent cancer and establish those services.

At first we should give priority and emphasise on preventive strategies as it is the cost effective and effectual way. We usually focus on the adult and building awareness among children remains in the back seat.

In this cancer day — parents, healthcare professionals and governmental decision-makers should be our target to raise awareness with proper information. Parents can make key efforts in the very beginning of their children's lives. But a major part of the campaign is also to raise awareness among government and policy level.

To boost and sustain the awareness programme, cancer prevention information should be included in children's text book. All citizens of Bangladesh should proactively participate in the prevention of cancer and to help people struggling with this life threatening disease.



Diabetes affects all these organs

CONTROL YOUR DIABETES

Diabetes linked to increase in kidney stones

Recent studies suggest that the incidence of kidney stones is increasing and data compiled by researchers at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, suggest that diabetes may be a predisposing factor, particularly for kidney stones composed of uric acid.

For closer scrutiny, Lieske's group obtained a random sample of 269 subjects with confirmed kidney stones and matched them with 260 individuals without kidney stones.

The odds of having diabetes in those with kidney stones was of a similar magnitude, but was no longer statistically significant due to the smaller sample size.

However, when the researchers analysed the cases according to stone type, the prevalence of diabetes was 40 percent among the 10 individuals with uric acid stones, versus 9 percent among the 112 with calcium stones and 7 percent in those without kidney stones.

After accounting for the patients' body mass index (the ratio between height and weight) patients with uric acid kidney stones had five times the risk of diabetes.

Source: American Journal of Kidney Disease

Medical Update

MEDICAL UPDATE

Test may identify heart attack, stroke risk

An inexpensive blood test may identify which heart disease patients are at the highest risk of a stroke or heart attack, allowing doctors to move more aggressively to help them, a study said.

"We are very good in this country at diagnosing heart disease," said Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, of the University of California-San Francisco, lead author of the study.

"But we're not very good at distinguishing who's at high risk for future problems and starting them on preventive therapies. This test could make all the difference," she added.

The study involved nearly 1,000 people who were fol-

lowed for over three years. The blood test measured a combination of amino acids called NT-proBNP related to heart function.

The researchers found that heart disease patients with the highest levels of the substance had nearly eight times the risk of stroke, heart attack or heart failure as did those with the lowest levels.

The test would cost from \$20 to \$40, according to information provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation which sponsored the study along with the U.S. National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

Source: Journal of the American Medical Association

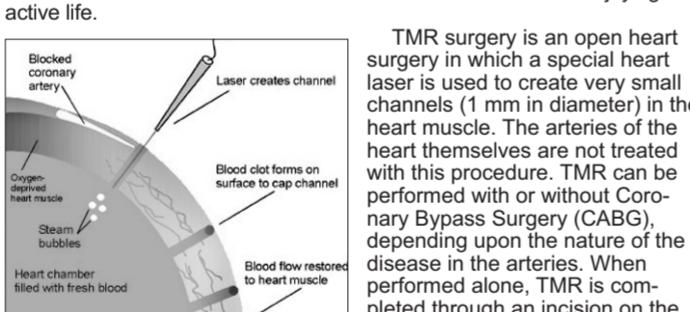
Cool technology provides innovative heart surgery

DR MD HABIBE MILLAT

Nobody thinks it is "cool" to have a heart operation, but thanks to technology a "cool" laser is providing thousands of patients with an alternative to stent or bypass surgery.

Laser heart surgery or Surgical Transmyocardial Laser Revascularisation (TMLR or TMR) is used to treat areas of the heart muscle where the blood supply is limited due to disease in the coronary arteries (atherosclerosis) which cannot be treated with standard stent/balloon angioplasty or bypass.

In 1999, while I had been working at Royal Infirmary Edinburgh, one Bangladeshi patient contacted me for advice on laser heart surgery. He had coronary artery bypass surgery done in Canada. He was suffering from symptomatic angina few years after surgery. Clinically he was not suitable for a second bypass surgery. We reviewed his medical documents and later on reviewed him and we did TMR on him. Now he is enjoying active life.



However, even with such treatment, migraine may persist. Because its attack is episodic in nature. Sometimes, episodic migraines increase in frequency to daily or near daily migraines often without the usual features of a migraine, such as nausea or light sensitivity.

Some people may experience migraine after taking cheese or some food can aggravate migraine that varies from person to person. So avoid the food that hastens your condition.

Treatment of migraine needs long time and it is strongly recommended that you consult with a neurologist before taking any drug. A physician can advise you the appropriate guideline.

When combined with CABG surgery, the incision may be either down the middle of the chest or through the left side of the chest. The bypass machine (heart-lung machine) may or may not be needed in the combined CABG/TMR surgery. It is thought to primarily involve stimulating the heart to grow small vessels (angiogenesis) in the areas where the channels are created.

More recently, the procedure involves threading a small catheter through coronary arteries. The laser light is carried through fiber optic bundles within the catheter. Another group of fibers shines a light at the tip to provide video pictures of the inside of the artery. Watching the video pictures, the doctor can spot areas of blockage and fire short bursts of laser beams to vaporise them.

TMR is a realistic option primarily for patients with heart disease that cannot be treated with CABG or angioplasty.

Dr Md Habibe Millat, FRCS is a Consultant Cardiac Surgeon at Square Hospital, Dhaka.



PHOTO COURTESY: WHO

There are more than 100 types of cancers; any part of the body can be affected. More than 70% of all cancer deaths occur in low and middle income countries. Worldwide, the 5 most common types of cancer that kill women are (in the order of frequency): breast, lung, stomach, colorectal and cervical. Tobacco use is the single largest preventable cause of cancer in the world. One fifth of all cancers worldwide are caused by a chronic infection, for example human papillomavirus (HPV) causes cervical cancer and hepatitis B virus (HBV) causes liver cancer. A third of cancers could be cured if detected early and treated adequately. All patients in need of pain relief could be helped if current knowledge about pain control and palliative care were applied. 40% of cancer could be prevented, mainly by not using tobacco, having a healthy diet, being physically active and preventing infections that may cause cancer.