

RETINOBLASTOMA: A CHILDHOOD TUMOUR OF EYE

Vision can be saved if detected early

DR KHAIR AHMED CHOUDHURY

A most common primary intraocular (inside the eyes) malignancy of childhood arises from primitive retinal cells of the eye. About 90% cases are diagnosed less than 3 years of age.

A common presentation is white pupillary reflex, some with squint and some with inflammation of the eye. In our country, most of the patients present with advance stage when the tumor extends externally.

In advance stage though the chance of saving eye is less but when other eye is examined and if a small lesion is detected, can be treated by focal therapy (Photocoagulation with Laser). Early detected is very important in that respect.

When treating retinoblastoma, it is first and foremost important to understand that it is a malignancy. When the disease is contained within the eye, survival rates exceed 95% in the western

world.

However with extra ocular spread survival rates decreases to under 50%. Therefore, in deciding on a treatment strategy, the first goal must be preservation of life then preservation of eye and finally preservation of vision.

The modern management of intraocular retinoblastoma currently incorporates a combination of different treatment modalities including chemotherapy, photocoagulation with Laser, cryotherapy, radiation therapy and surgery like enucleation (removal of globe).

Metastatic disease is managed with intensive chemotherapy, radiation and bone marrow transplantation. Among all of this treatment options — the best, cheap and less hazardous option is photocoagulation with Diode Laser if tumor is detected in early stage with a very small lesion. If laser is applied, eye



can be saved, even useful vision can be preserved. The treatment of children

with retinoblastoma requires a team approach including an ocular oncologist, pediatric ophthalmologist, pediatric oncologist and radiation oncologist.

The chemo, radiation therapies are very expensive. Comparing all modalities, the photocoagulation therapy with Diode Laser is cheaper. This facility is available at the government set-up in Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital. The facility is available on courtesy of WHO. Expert manpower is available there and moreover the service is offered at free of cost.

The facility of laser photocoagulation can save valuable life of a child and also rescue a family from a danger point. Children with intraocular retinoblastoma who have access to modern medical care have a very good prognosis for survival. The Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital is ready to provide that service to the needy subjects.

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Group recommends easier test to diagnose diabetes

REUTERS, Washington

A simple blood test that indicates average blood sugar levels over the past several weeks is the best way to diagnose diabetes, and doctors can abandon older, clumsier tests, diabetes experts said.

The A1C test, which does not require fasting, is the best and easiest way to diagnose diabetes, the American Diabetes Association, International Diabetes Federation and European Association for the Study of Diabetes agreed.

They made their endorsement at a meeting in New Orleans. "(This is) the first major departure from the way we diagnose diabetes in 30 years," Dr David Nathan of Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital told a news briefing.

The test measures damage to hemoglobin, the stuff that makes blood red, that is done by consistently high blood sugar levels. A hemoglobin A1C level of 5 percent is considered normal. The groups agreed that a level of 6.5

percent or higher should lead to a diagnosis of diabetes.

Most doctors use one of two tests to diagnose diabetes — fasting plasma glucose or the oral glucose tolerance test. Both require the patient to prepare, either by fasting or by drinking a sugary solution.

The A1C test requires only a small sample of blood. "Testing for diabetes using A1C is more convenient and easier for patients who will no longer be required to perform a fasting or oral glucose tolerance test," Nathan said.

The American Diabetes Association recommends screening all adults for diabetes who are overweight and have additional risk factors, such as a family history of diabetes, high blood pressure, or abnormal cholesterol or triglyceride levels. And even people with none of these risk factors should be tested beginning at age 45.

Diabetes can cause heart disease, blindness, kidney disease and force amputations. Most cases are type 2 diabetes, linked with a lack of exercise and poor diet.

What are the anti aging foods?

DR MD ABEDUR RAHMAN

Some of the features that characterise aging are formation of wrinkles, low energy levels, memory loss, health problems like osteoporosis, weak muscles and bones etc. It is not your age that decides your youthfulness, but it is your inner feelings that make you feel you are old.

Staying young and keeping fit are absolutely in your hands. It is not just anti aging creams that can help, but there are also other factors like nutrition and exercise, that keep you young.

Anti aging is possible. The body is designed to heal and repair itself with the aid of proper nutrition. The body requires two vital materials to complete this — energy and raw material. These two requirements are needed to maintain the cell's proper functions.

Each cell needs the proper food to keep it strong. Cells die and replace themselves at various intervals. To understand anti-aging, understand that when a cell replaces itself it has three options that it can replace itself with:

1. A cell may replace itself with a weaker cell each time.

A cell will do this if it has not had the right nutritional foods available to it. This process is called degeneration.

2. A cell can replace itself with the same strength cell. This means the body does not improve. That is, you have a chronic condition.

3. The cell is capable of replacing itself with a strong

research reveals more and more about how the human body works, what foods promote a healthy body, and what foods cause physical stress, it is becoming evident that many of the life threatening diseases experienced by aging people are the result of an unhealthy lifestyle and a poor diet.



ger and better cell. This will happen only if the cell has an abundance of energy and the right raw materials. This process is called regeneration. It is anti-aging.

There are certain foods that have special properties, unique components that make them literally antiaging food. As scientific

viewed from this perspective, any food that forms part of a healthy diet might be considered anti aging foods, but it is also true that some foods in particular seem to have unusual properties.

Foods which can help regeneration and anti-aging include

- and sprouted grains
- Almonds, especially if they have been soaked in water for 24 hours ('sprouted')
- Allium Family: garlic, onion, leeks, scallions, chives, and shallots.
- Green leafy vegetables
- Beans and Lentils: black, kidney, navy, pinto, chickpeas, soybeans, peas, and lentils.
- Nuts: walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds.
- Hot Peppers: bell and chili peppers
- Brown rice that has been soaked for 22 hours. This makes it alkaline
- Organic Cottage cheese and yogurt. They are alkaline. The bacteria has changed the original milk.
- Spirulina
- Barley greens
- Aloe vera
- Antioxidants (eg vitamin C, vitamin E)
- Olive oil
- Gentle sunlight (vitamin D)

In addition, frequent drinks of good water is crucial. Many people's health problems and anti-aging would improve if they would just drink more good water!

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The power of turmeric powder

Turmeric has been used in traditional Asian medicine to treat wounds, arthritic pain, infections, scabies (when used on the skin) and other illnesses over 2500 years in the South Asian region. And it is long been believed that the main ingredient of turmeric — known as 'curcumin' is responsible for its healing power; but it has not been known how curcumin exactly works inside the human body.

According to an article recently published in 'the Journal of the American Chemical Society' has revealed the secret behind the healing power of turmeric. Scientists used solid-state NMR spectroscopy to examine molecules of curcumin and found that they act like a 'biochemical disciplinarian.' The molecules insert themselves into cell membranes and make the membranes more stable and orderly in a way that boosts cells' resistance to infection by disease-causing microbes.

Researchers found 'curcumin' the main ingredient of turmeric was identified as responsible for most of the biological effects. Curcumin was found to enhance the production of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) that supports nerve growth.

It has been said that when combined with cauliflower, it has shown to prevent prostate cancer

and stop the growth of existing prostate cancer. There is also evidence that 'piperine', found in black pepper, improves the absorption of turmeric.

In 1998 Indian researchers at St. John's Medical College (Bangalore), found that a low dose of turmeric could have a greater effect in terms of health benefits when combined with piperine than a large dose of turmeric would.

Dosages between half a teaspoon three times a day of a mixture of 16 parts of turmeric powder to 1 part of ground black pepper, and two teaspoons of turmeric powder and half a teaspoon of ground black pepper per day have been recommended.

Today, many studies have revealed that turmeric is one of nature's most powerful healers, proving beneficial in the treatment of many different health conditions from simple infection to complicated Alzheimer's disease. The medicinal properties of this spice have been slowly revealing its natural wonder.

However, due to methodological weaknesses in many available studies, an evidence-based recommendation cannot be made regarding the use of turmeric for any specific illness. More human studies are needed before a final recommendation can be made about all above diseases.



New programme seeks to deliver vaccines to poor

REUTERS, London

Five governments and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation pledged \$1.5 billion to help give poor countries better access to vaccines against pneumococcal disease such as pneumonia and meningitis.

The Advance Market Commitment programme creates financial incentive with a guaranteed price to persuade companies to invest the large sums of money it takes to develop new vaccines.

The GAVI Alliance, the Gates-funded group established to speed delivery of vaccines against a wide range of disease to the developing world, will run the programme and allocate another \$1.3 billion for it.

"We look forward to pharmaceutical firms applying to the Advance Market Commitment quickly in order to ensure the rapid introduction of life-saving vaccines," Julian Lob-Levyt, chairman of the Geneva-based GAVI Alliance, said in a statement.

Pneumococcal disease kills more than 1.6 million people worldwide each year, including at least 800,000 children. More than 90 percent of the deaths occur in

the world's poorest countries.

Vaccine research is often viewed as a low priority by pharmaceutical companies, especially when the target market is the developing world.

The current vaccine costs more than \$70 per dose in the industrialised world but the new programme funded by the governments of Italy, Britain, Canada, Russia and Norway aims to bring the long-term price down to \$3.50 in poor countries.

"This innovative new model will mean faster access to vaccines for millions of children in poor countries," Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation said in a statement.

The programme aims to spur vaccine development by guaranteeing a price. This commitment provides pharmaceutical companies with the incentive to do the research and to build manufacturing capacity, the GAVI Alliance said.

The goal is to introduce the vaccines in up to 60 of the world's poorest countries by 2015 as part of the challenge to make the treatment part of regular immunisation programmes.

Overeating: What causes it?

STAR HEALTH DESK

It may seem obvious, but it is worth saying that we eat for many reasons — hunger and appetite, of course — but also to celebrate, to be social, to soothe and to relieve boredom. To prevent overeating and weight gain, we first have to understand what drives us to eat.

Hunger: The physical sensation that you need to eat

Think about the rumbling in your stomach. That is a physical sensation. Numerous studies have looked at how hormones initiate and end eating playing a major role in determining body weight. The physical sensation of hunger or its absence is tied to these hormones. The time of day, timing of meals, emotions such as stress or contentment, and even the types of foods you eat all affect these hormones.

Appetite: The desire to eat Problems with appetite regulation can be mild and contribute to gradual changes in weight or they can be severe such as

anorexia and bulimia. Appetite problems may be caused by disease, medications or even psychological issues.

Satiety: The condition of physically feeling full Research has shown that feeling full turns off hunger and appetite. You can feel fuller longer by eating solids over liquids, not skipping meals, choosing high-volume and low-calorie foods (vegetables and fruit), and substituting whole grains for refined grain products. The answer is still out, however, on whether individual diets — for instance high versus low carb or protein or fat offer an advantage when

it comes to satiety.

Mindless eating

This is a term coined for all of the other reasons that we eat. Do you fall prey to mindless eating? Have you noticed that when you order a super-size meal you typically eat all of it? Do certain situations, such as watching TV or talking on the phone, trigger overeating?

Yes, the reasons we eat are complex. Given the epidemic of obesity, it is obvious that overeating is a significant problem. It is critical to find ways to turn down hunger, normalise our desire for food, feel full and satisfied, and deal with the situations that trigger us to mindlessly eat.



MYTH

Shaving makes hair grow back faster and coarser

This myth persists even though a study conducted 80 years ago disproved it. Hair that is shaved is dead, and shaving has no effect on the speed of re-growth. The new growth may appear darker since it has not been exposed to the sun or chemicals for very long. Also, it may seem coarser since the ends have not been tapered by wear and tear.