

Donate blood, save lives

DR MUNTASIR MARUF

Everyday, thousands of people undergoing major surgeries need blood transfusion. Many people suffering from various conditions like haemophilia (genetic disease that impair the body's ability to control blood clotting), dengue, severe anaemia, blood cancer, thalassemia need blood transfusion. On an average, 3 to 3.5 lakh bags of blood are needed in our country every year. There is always strict advice to transfuse safe blood. But from where these amount of blood will come? Blood is not produced in a factory and yet there is no alternative source for blood. The only source of blood is human body.

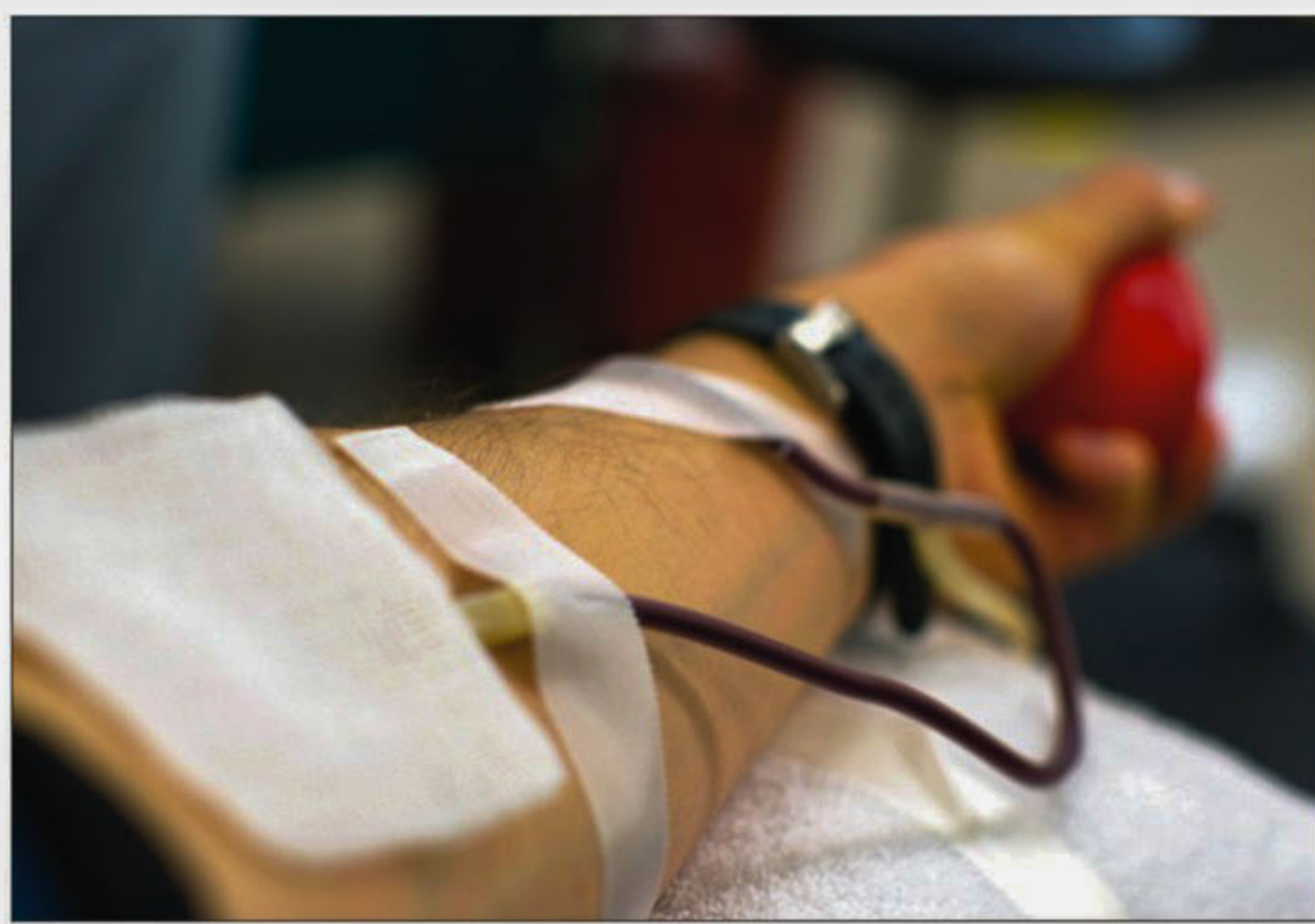
Usually, blood from relative is encouraged for transfusion. But if a healthy relative of the same blood group is not available, blood from any healthy voluntary donor of that group may be transfused. In our country, people usually depend on the organisations like Sandhani, Red Crescent, Badhon, Quantam etc. for safe and fresh blood. We should remember that these organisations or institutions do not manufacture blood. They are only the media to collect blood from healthy voluntary

donors to provide it to the needy people. The more the voluntary donor, the more these organisations will make blood available.

Here the question comes — who can donate blood? Any person within the age group of 18-60 years with a body weight as minimum 45 kg for female and 48 kg for male and having a general well-health is an eligible blood donor. Healthy means that you feel well and can perform normal activities; your blood pressure, pulse, body temperature are normal; and you are free from any blood boarn diseases such as malaria, syphilis, gonorrhoea, hepatitis B, C, AIDS, haemophilia etc.

You may have chronic conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure; but in these cases, healthy means — you are being treated and the condition is under control. Such healthy people can donate one bag (350-450 ml) blood safely every 4 months.

After donating blood, the donor should take rest for 15-20 minutes. Routine work is absolutely fine after the initial rest. Rigorous physical work should be avoided for few hours. After resting for a while a donor should be given some liquid (fluid) to drink, such as water, ORS,



milk or fruit juice. The donor needs no special diet other than a routine balanced diet. The body replaces blood volume or plasma within 24 hours.

It is very unfortunate that voluntary blood donation is still not so popular in our country. This is due to the lack of proper awareness, social movement, irrational fear and superstitions about donating blood. Some organisations are working in this field but still the number

of voluntary blood donor is not keeping pace with the yearly requirement of blood.

In a study conducted by Sandhani, Dhaka Medical College Unit, it was seen that 62 percent of the population were unaware of the blood-transmitted diseases, 53 percent of people did not even know what their blood group was; 66 percent admitted that their knowledge about blood donation was not sufficient.

For the lack of adequate

voluntary donors, many patients are being compelled to buy blood from professional blood donors. Such donors are more likely to carry dangerous infections and their blood is more likely to be of lower standard, as they tend to donate, better to say, trade more frequently.

In Bangladesh, mostly drug addicts sell their blood to get money to buy drugs for addiction. Usually they are under-nourished, having less haemoglobin in their blood.

They also suffer from various blood transmissible diseases. So, the patient who is getting that blood, though initially may be benefited, is in risk of having many diseases.

In a research conducted in our country, 22 percent of the professional donor was found having Syphilis and 29 percent having Hepatitis-B. A study conducted in BSMMU showed that 60.1 percent of the patients suffered from hepatitis, who got transmitted unscreened blood from professional donors.

Again, many patients fail to get any kind of blood, not from voluntary donors, not from professional donors even. Voluntary donors' safe blood and professionals' unsafe blood collectively fail to fulfill the yearly requirements of Bangladesh.

If only 1% of the population donate blood once a year (though a healthy donor can donate blood 3 times a year safely), the yearly collection stands a satisfactory number which may fulfil the requirement smoothly.

Mathematically it is an easy task but it does not happen in reality. We all need come forward to save thousands of lives dying due to the shortage of blood.

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SpermCheck Fertility test devices showing expected results for normal (left), low (center) and very low (right) sperm concentrations.

Test allows men to check their sperm-count at home

REUTERS HEALTH, New York

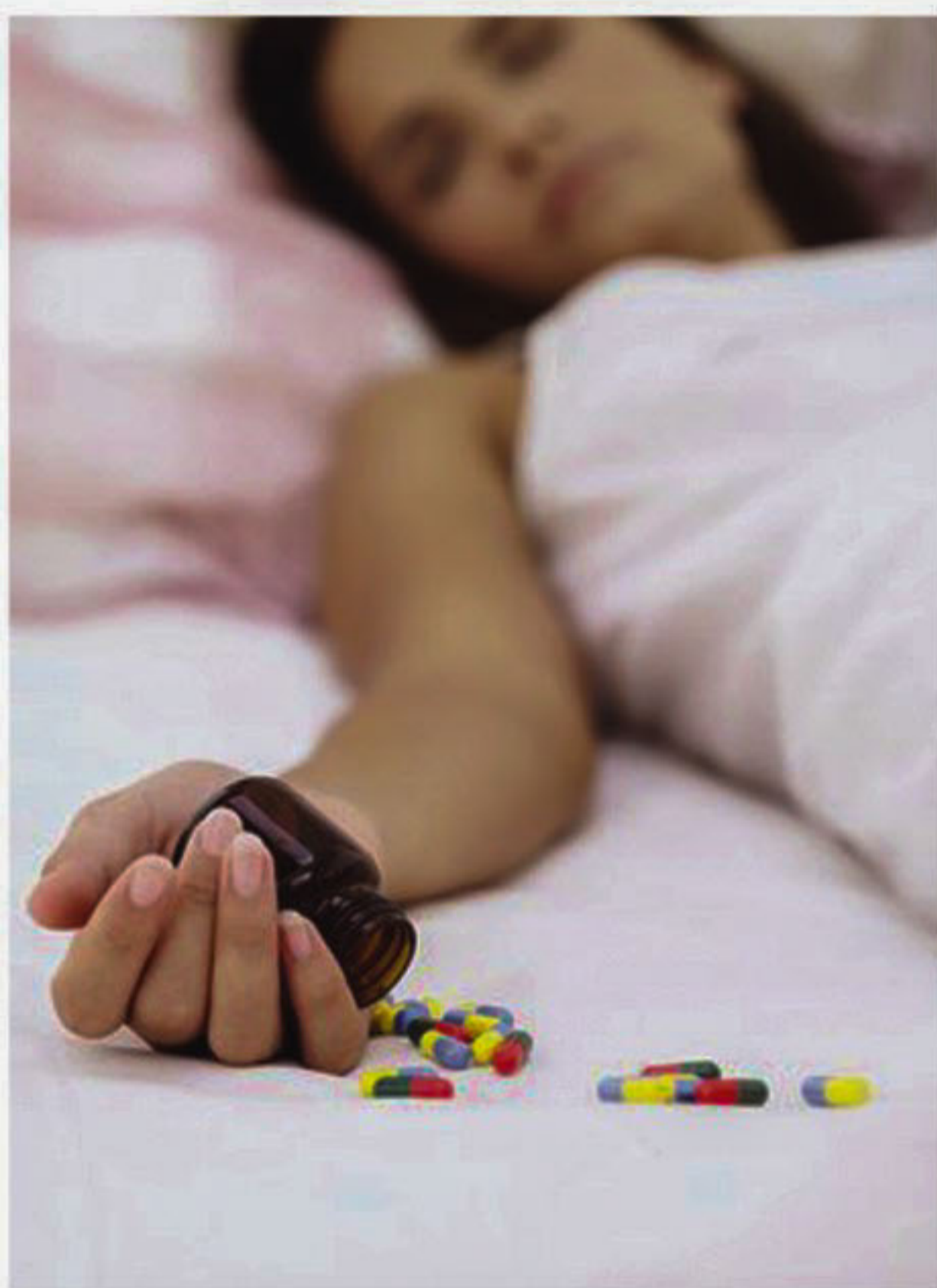
Home fertility tests are not just for women anymore. A new device that looks a lot like those home ovulation and home pregnancy tests but checks sperm count will soon be available in Europe, and is undergoing Food and Drug Administration (FDA) review for marketing in the US.

The test targets couples who have been trying to get pregnant for a few months, but are not ready to seek professional help, Dr. John C. Herr of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, who helped develop the new test, informed.

The test helps couples sort out if the male is a factor in the infertility "and to do that in privacy with some cost savings," he said. "The product will retail for about \$25. That is a lot cheaper than going in and having a full semen analysis."

In the journal Human Reproduction, Herr and his team report on a study comparing the accuracy of their SpermCheck Fertility test with standard laboratory sperm count methods, using 225 semen samples. The tests were accurate 96 percent of the time, the researchers found. Ninety-five percent of the time a laboratory professional and a lay person got the same result when reading a single test independently.

Sperm counts of 20 million per milliliter of semen and above are considered normal. The test will tell a man whether or not his sperm count meets this cutoff, and if it does not whether he has a severely low sperm count (below 5 million sperm per milliliter). "It basically tells the man how deep the infertility is," Herr explains. "If both strips are negative it's important that they then seek medical treatment for the infertility."



Move together to promote mental health

DR AHMED HELAL SOTON

Although mental health is crucial to the overall well-being of individuals, societies and the country, it is largely neglected and often overlooked in Bangladesh. World Health Organisation (WHO) has given utmost importance to promote mental health services and has been campaigning for the full incorporation of mental health in public health. But it is matter of great regret that many people including some of health professionals are very reluctant to give mental health a priority.

About 16.01 per cent adult and 18.35 per cent children are suffering from mental illness in Bangladesh. With this enormous disease burden, a very few number of mental health professionals are struggling to cope with mental disorders. There are only 120 psychiatrists in our country. Other mental health professionals (psychologists, psychiatric nurses etc) are also

very limited in number.

WHO published an assessment instrument for mental health system in Bangladesh in 2007. It revealed — there are 0.073 psychiatrist and 0.00071 psychologist per 100000 populations. Total indoor beds for mental patients are only 813 against the whole population (0.58 bed/100000 people). With the lack of resources, we have many negative attitudes to the mental health issues.

WHO stated that mental health is more than the absence of mental illness, and it is vital to individuals, families and societies. Mental health is determined by socioeconomic factors, linked to behaviour. There are lots of impact on mental health from the global warming and climate change, but little crying we hear from the environmentalist on this issue.

Beside the individual disease burden, there is huge impact of mental health on social capital. The level of well being, physical health, knowledge and skill,

productivity, quality of relationship, sexual satisfaction, trust, social cohesion all are integrated to mental health and ultimately linked with social capital. Good mental health is also an important resource for families, communities and nations. Mental health is a useful tool in the human rights framework.

Among the global disease burden, mental illnesses pose a bigger place than many of overemphasised physical illnesses. Our attitude towards mental health is running on the wrong track. It is time to change our attitude and false belief. Mental health concerns everyone as it is generated in our everyday lives at homes, schools and workplace. Positive mental health contributes to the social, human and economic capital of societies. To promote mental health, we all should move together.

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Ways to boost your memory

Often, we face embarrassing situations when we cannot recall names of people very known to us or forget the date of birthday of our beloved one. Then we started to blame our poor memory. Although everyone's capacity to memories things is not the same but we can boost our existing memory by staying mentally active including physical activity in your daily routine. Here are some ways you can try to improve your memory:

Stay mentally active

Mentally stimulating activities help keep our brain in shape and memory loss at bay. Doing crossword puzzles and reading a section of the newspaper that you normally skip are helpful. Take alternate routes when driving. Learn to play a musical instrument. Volunteer at a local school or community organisation.

Socialise regularly

Social interaction helps ward off depression and stress, both of which can contribute to memory loss. Look for opportunities to get together with loved ones, friends and others especially if you live alone. When you are invited to share a meal or attend an event, do not wait. **Get organised** You are more likely to forget things if your home is cluttered and your notes are in disarray. Jot down tasks, appointments and other events in a special notebook or calendar. You might even repeat each entry out loud as you write it down to help cement it in your memory. Keep to-do lists current, and check off items you have completed. Set aside a certain place for your wallet, keys and other essentials. **Focus** Limit distractions, and do not try to do too many things at once. If you focus on the information that you are trying to remember, you will be more likely to recall it later. It might also help to con-



nect what you are trying to remember to a favorite song or another familiar concept.

Eat a healthy diet

A heart-healthy diet is as good for your brain as it is for your heart. Focus on fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Choose low-fat protein sources, such as lean meat, skinless poultry and fish. What you drink counts, too. Not enough water or too much alcohol can lead to confusion and memory loss.

Include physical activity in your daily routine

Physical activity increases blood flow to your whole body, including your brain — which may help keep your memory sharp. Aim for at least 30 minutes of aerobic activity a day. If you do not have time for a full workout, squeeze in a few 10-minute walks throughout the day.

Manage chronic conditions

Follow your doctor's treatment recommendations for any chronic conditions, such as thyroid problems, high blood pressure, diabetes and depression. The better you take care of yourself, the better your memory is likely to be.

We have a tremendous capacity to remember, but we must keep stimulating our brain to make a significant impact on how well we remember. One of the important ways we did not mention above is to stimulate our memory is through practice and rehearsal. This technique helps us to transfer material from short-term to long-term memory (permanent), so that it can be recalled readily. Then we must exercise our memory regularly and cross-train our brain to have important information etched into the memory bank in brain.

Source: www.mayoclinic.com

Antidepressants of mother may delay baby's first steps

When pregnant women take antidepressants, it sometimes causes their babies to hit developmental milestones late, Danish researchers reported recently.

However, the delays — up to one month — still place the toddlers within the normal range of development.

"These drugs have an effect on the fetus' brain," said Dr. Lars Henning Pedersen, who worked on the study. But, he said, the delays "may not matter for the child at all." Pedersen, from Aarhus University Hospital in Denmark spoke. Now, many pregnant women are diagnosed with major depressive disorders and most are treated with antidepressants. For their study, Pedersen and his colleagues tapped into a nation-wide Danish database of more than 100,000 pregnancies.

They identified some 400 women who took antidepressants during pregnancy as well as nearly 500 who were not on medication despite being depressed. Based on the women's own reports, the researchers then compared how many children in each group hit developmental milestones such as sitting without support, looking after sounds and venting irritation.

At six months, the only differences between babies were seen in their gross movements. Among babies exposed to antidepressants in the second or third semester, 26 percent were able to sit on their own, compared to 30 percent of those not exposed. The exposed toddlers took an average of 16 days longer to learn how to sit, after adjusting for maternal age, breast feeding and other factors. They also started walking about 29 days later. At 19 months, the movement differences had vanished, although the exposed children were slightly worse at occupying themselves without calling out for attention.

Despite the concerns raised by these findings, which add to earlier reports of increased pain sensitivity and risk of heart problems in babies exposed to antidepressants in the womb, experts say that pregnant women with depression should not necessarily avoid antidepressants.

"It's really a question of balancing benefits and risks to the mother and child," developmental pediatrician Dr. Tim Oberlander of the University of British Columbia said.

The latest guidelines from The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Psychiatric Association recommend that pregnant women consult an ob-gyn and a psychiatrist before deciding on treatment.

Source: Paediatrics

DUCECP extends eye care services for the poor

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Dhaka Urban Comprehensive Eye Care Project (DUCECP) has incorporated new features in its ongoing five year project to bring more people under its comprehensive eye care services. The project's focus is to provide treatment care at minimum to free of cost more on hard to reach poor and extreme poor people living in Dhaka city.

The project that started on October 2008 has targeted 33,000 cataract surgeries, 67,000 free spectacles to correct refractive error, 2,100 training sessions to the frontline staffs and screening of mass population including school children by September 2013.

DUCECP is funded mostly by the Standard Chartered Bank's Seeing is Believing (SiB) initiative and Sightsavers International, UK based charity on eye care.

Till December 2009, approximately 8,558 people have got their sight restored after successful cataract surgeries with the support of this project. Besides surgeries, 65,672 urban people and 1,423 school children, mostly poor, have been examined and 4,082 free glasses have been distributed. Along with the leading cause of blindness — cataract, they have programmed to intensify their efforts in other eye care services like refractive error, low vision, dacryocystitis (inflammation of the tear sac), squint, Pterygium (growth in the conjunctiva) and operations like DCT, DCR.

Moreover, they have conducted primary eye care training sessions to over 500 front-line staffs of their collaborative partner organisations. Now they have scheduled extensive training sessions for people from different sections of the society to create widespread awareness in the community.

The project is covering 15 constituencies of Dhaka city with the support of more than 50 collaborative partners organisations. The DUCECP has four partner hospitals — Islamia Eye Hospital at Farmget, Bangladesh National Society for the Blind (BNSB), Dhaka Eye Hospital at Mirpur, Ad-Din Hospital at Maghbazar, Salauddin Specialised Hospital Ltd. at Hatkhola to provide operative and other in-patient services for eye diseases. Experienced ophthalmologists of those hospitals provide the eye care treatment to the poor people.

DUCECP Project Coordinator M Nurun Nabi informed Star Health that they have made designed such a wonderful pro-poor programme, from where they get the maximum benefit to get treated their eye problems. Bringing poor people like, rickshaw pullers, day labourers, street children, garment workers, low-income households and street vendors who can not afford costly eye treatment are the major concern of this project.



Front-line staffs participating in a training session to educate community people on primary eye care are seen in the photo. They refer patients to the eye camps for screening and subsequent treatment purpose.