

Reducing risk of sudden death in Epilepsy

DR MD RAJIB HOSSAIN

22-year-old Fahim was diagnosed with epilepsy, a recurrent seizure disorder 12 years back. His seizure called generalised tonic-clonic was controlled with medications. For last 12 months, he had no episode of seizure and he took medication irregularly thinking that he had recovered. One morning, he was sleeping for very long and his parents came to make him awake. They became seized by grief when they saw that Fahim is not breathing. When they took him to a hospital, doctor confirmed his death.

Fahim's death was sudden and unexpected. The cause of his death was listed as Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy (SUDEP). SUDEP accounts for up to 17 percent of all deaths in people with epilepsy. Most patients and their families do not know it until they lose someone from their family.

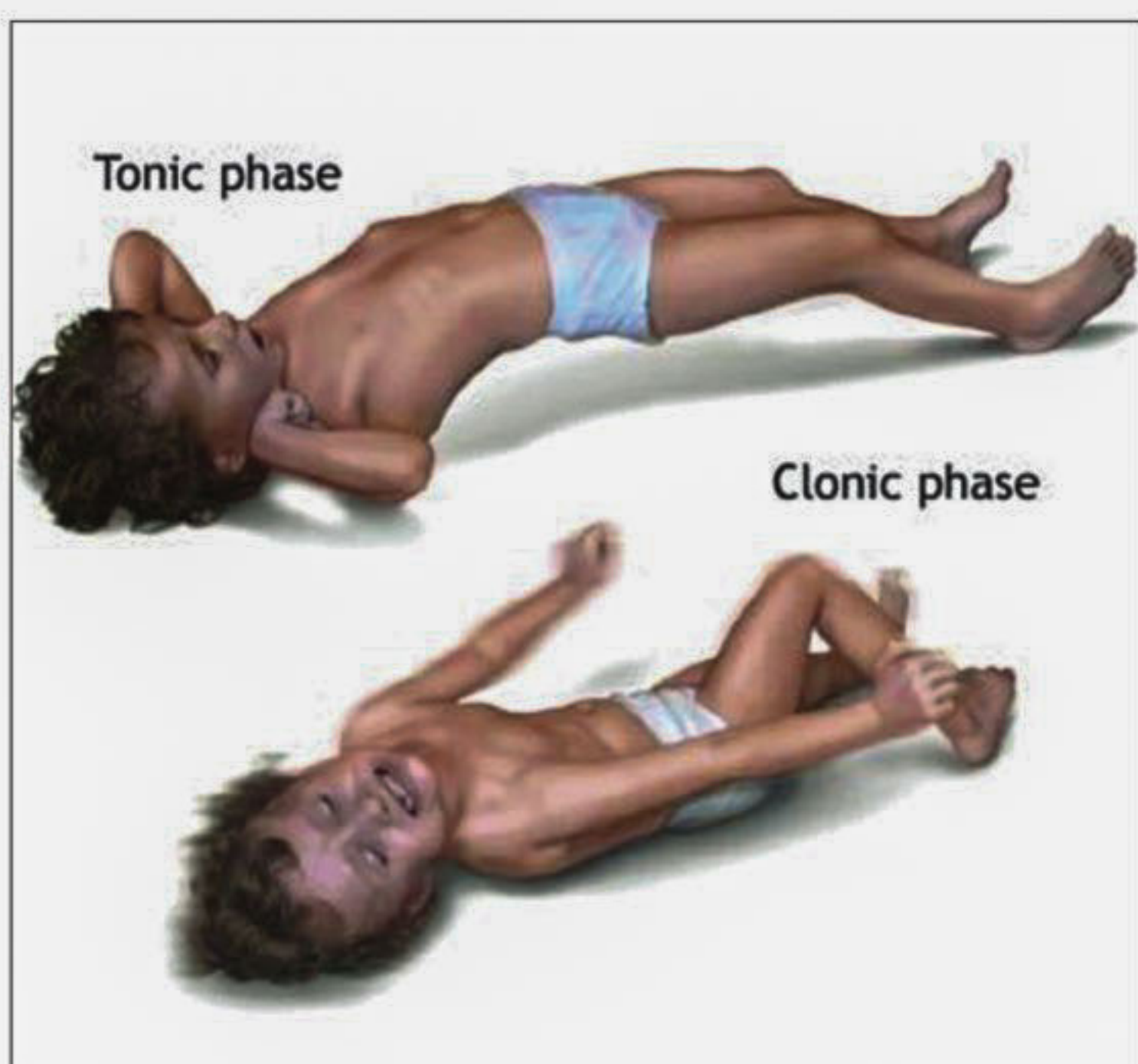
This death is sometimes called unexplained death as it may occur without any obvious clinical or pathological explanations. There is a possibility of irreversible cardiac arrest, respiratory arrest (breathing stopped) by a seizure.

SUDEP commonly affects people with uncontrolled or poorly controlled seizure taking a large number of anti-epileptic medications or take them irregularly. Most often, young people aged between 20 to 40 years are affected and die. People with severe epilepsy and learning difficulties, having at least a 2-year history of epilepsy, alcohol abuse are also at risk of SUDEP. Eminent neurologist of Bangladesh Prof Dr Md Abdul Hayee said that a patient with epilepsy can live a long and normal life if s/he knows about the disease. Controlling the seizure is the most important thing people should take into count.

He pointed out that many people discontinue the anti-epileptic drug after seizure absent or controlled for a transient period. This is a harmful practice and particularly causes fatal complications like SUDEP, severe acute epileptic attack (called status epilepticus). People should take the drug regularly as long as the neurologist prescribed.

"Depending on the severity and type of epilepsy, patients are prescribed with long term medication. For most cases, people have to take drug for life long to control epilepsy completely. About 15 to 25 percent patients have to take medication for shorter duration of 5 years", he added.

He advised people with epilepsy to avoid certain job like driving, swimming alone, and work near fire or water. He informed that when attack occurs, people around the patient should help him/her to lie on soft place, remove dangerous and sharp object around him/her and maintain proper air flow. People should not hold the patient firmly during a seizure or should not insert anything to keep mouth open.



Follow up is another important matter for people living with epilepsy. A visit at regular interval to

neurologist can guide the patient properly with adjustment of drug dosage and assessing prognosis.

It is surprising that many people still believe the misconception that epilepsy is an incurable disease; once people affected, no treatment can reverse/control it. They are reluctant to seek modern treatment; rather they seek indigenous treatment. Many people in rural part of Bangladesh believe the superstition that epilepsy is a ghostly phenomena and try to treat the patients by traditional healer brutally and harshly. Moreover, social stigma adds sufferings to these people with epilepsy. Awareness regarding the disease is extremely low throughout the Bangladesh which needs to be step up immediately.

Those with poorly controlled seizures have an almost 1 in 10 chance of dying over the course of a decade. We can prevent most of these deaths by reducing the risk factors. Prevention is in our hands. We have to be our own advocate by knowing the disease. Nothing but awareness and knowledge can save many lives of epilepsy patients from sudden and unexpected deaths.

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Neem tree The wonder woman

'Neem' has always been known as a magical tree which is well known to the Indian subcontinent, contributing to a large number of remedies.

It is used to cure both human and animal sicknesses. Starting from this evergreen tree's leaves, fruits, seeds to its extracts/products, it is used in medicines, cosmetics and pest control. These have been used in India for several thousand years, and are still being used. Many Indian people consider this tree as "the village pharmacy", and have vast trust in its capacity.

The antimicrobial properties of neem bark, leaves and seeds are used to cure skin allergies, rashes, acne, etc. Some believe that it can be used as a cure for leprosy. And the extracts are also used to manufacture drugs and ointments beneficial to curing arthritis.

These days, you will find many dental care products (tooth paste/powder) related to neem. Neem twigs are used in raw or powdered form for oral care.

Although this is a plant, but that does not mean it is totally harmless all the time. Keeping in mind, some of the world's strongest toxins are herbal, there are limitations of its products as well. So, read about neem's toxicity and consult a proper doctor before you take it internally.

Dental plaque and its management



Signs of hand arthritis

Arthritis, the medical term for joint inflammation, commonly affects the relatively small joints of the hands. According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, the warning signs of hand arthritis include:

- Pain in the hands and fingers, especially after firmly holding an object for a long period.
- Stiffness and pain that is more noticeable in the morning.
- Swollen or disfigured joints.
- A feeling of warmth in the joints.
- A feeling that the bones in the joints are rubbing together, or that a joint is loose.
- Cysts (sac containing fluid) near the joints at the ends of the finger.

Dental plaque, which is a sticky, soft, colorless material adhering to the teeth, consists of bacterial cells, salivary polymers, food residuals and bacterial by-products. Not removing plaque bacteria from the mouth regularly can lead to tooth decay and dental cavities (caries) or periodontal problems (such as gingivitis and periodontitis).

Plaque formation gradually occurs when there is stronger attachment by means of sticky glucose, which are produced by the bacteria from dietary sugars. As plaque matures, a thick layer is formed and harbor different types of microorganisms. Plaque, which is few hours old, is much less harmful than plaque, which is few days old. If plaque is not removed, it calcifies into tartar (calculus). Once calculus is formed, it cannot be removed by brushing and requires professional removal.

The following tips will help you to remove the plaque:

1. Use floss to remove germs and food particles between teeth. Ease the floss into place gently. Do not snap it into place — this could harm your gums.
2. Use any tooth brushing method that is comfortable, but do not scrub hard back and forth. Small circular motions and short back and forth motions work well.
3. To prevent decay, use fluoride toothpaste. Fluoride is what protects teeth from decay.
4. Food residues, especially sweets, provide nutrients for the germs that cause tooth decay, as well as those that cause gum disease. So, reduce amount and frequency of sugary



food and drinks. That is why it is important to remove all food residues, as well as plaque, from teeth. Remove plaque at least once a day — twice a day is better. If you brush and floss once daily, do it before going to bed.

5. Chew sugar free gums.
6. Between meals, have fresh fruits, vegetables or cheese instead of cakes, biscuits and dried fruits.
7. Do not give sugary drinks and milk in bottles to children too often, especially just before sleep.

The write up is compiled by Dr Kazi Md Niazur Rahman, a Dental Surgeon working at Dhaka Dental College and Hospital. E-mail: dr_niaz24@yahoo.com

Get rid of itchy scalp

STAR HEALTH DESK

Imagine yourself at work, at the bus stop, at the party, at a seminar, scratching away with all your might on that extremely itchy scalp of yours.

An itchy scalp is an extremely pathetic condition. Dandruff, head lice, acne are reasons for itchy scalp. There could be scalp psoriasis also. Itchy scalp problems could occur due to hair products that are used on the scalp. These products could be harsh and so is the agent for cleansing. Bacteria may present at the root of the hair can cause itches and also serious hair problems like hair thinning. Dry scalp often cause itches and using a shampoo with a good conditioner can help the hair to get moisture and stay soft.

Dandruff also causes itches and the best help with dandruff is medicated shampoo. The flaking and itching of the scalp is due to this disease scalp psoriasis. Shampoo made with drugs also helpful in treating various scalp itches and hair problem.

If itches appear on the scalp it is best to visit a doctor and seek help. An itchy scalp could be the onset of many hair problems and it is very essential that it should be treated with care to keep the problem under control.



MEDICAL ADVANCEMENT

Wireless sensor watches blood sugar for diabetics

REUTERS, Washington

Researchers have developed an implantable sensor that measures blood sugar continuously and transmits the information without wires — a milestone, they said, in diabetes treatment.

The device worked in one pig for more than a year and in another for nearly 10 months with no trouble, they reported in the journal Science Translational Medicine.

It takes the diabetes field a step closer to development of an "artificial pancreas" — a device that can replace natural functions to control how the body handles blood sugar.

And it would be handy for people who need to check blood sugar daily, such as patients with type 2 diabetes, the team at the University of California San Diego and nearby privately held GlySens Inc wrote.

"You can run the device for a year or more with it constantly working, and recording glucose quite satisfactorily," bioengineering professor David Gough, who led the study, said in a statement.

"We hope to begin the first human trial in a few months," Gough added. He said his team has been testing such experimental devices in pigs for 31 years.

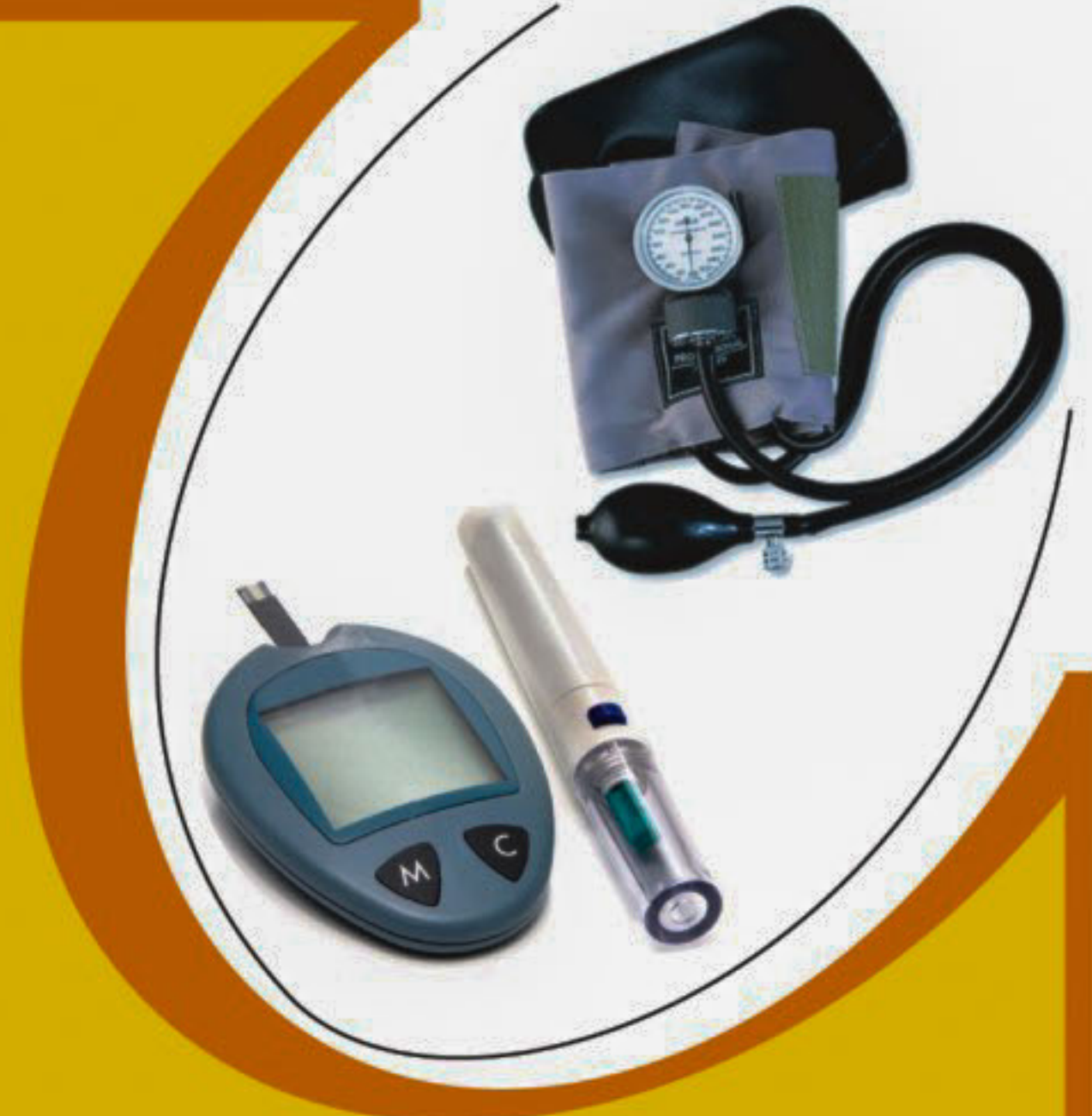
Medical device makers have been working to develop a so-called artificial pancreas to deliver insulin to patients with type 1 diabetes, an autoimmune disease in which the body destroys its own ability to make insulin and thus to properly break down sugar.

Knowing for better living

In Bangladesh...

69% patients are not aware of their hypertension & diabetes

- Check your blood pressure regularly
- Check your diabetes regularly
- Control your body weight
- Exercise regularly
- Avoid fatty foods
- Consult your Doctor



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