

## Eliminating inequities, myths in cardiac care

DR MD RAJIB HOSSAIN

In recent years, the field of cardiology (which deals with heart diseases) has been developed remarkably in Bangladesh with the establishment of high tech private and specialised cardiac hospitals. Despite these advancements, common people often face significant hurdles in finding timely and affordable health care to get treated and protected against world's largest killers, heart diseases.

Concentrated cardiac services in the urban areas and inadequate government set up create a huge discrepancy in cardiac healthcare delivery to rural and urban people making the situation worse. Experts urged to take urgent action to bridge the gap and make cardiac care accessible for all.

Contrary to popular belief, heart disease is not a disease for the well off group of the society only. Statistics from World Health Organisation (WHO) revealed that 80 percent of deaths from cardiovascular diseases are occurring among the



poor, in low and middle-income countries where men and women are equally affected.

In government settings, one National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) and a few government medical college hospitals have the setup to provide quality

cardiac care including coronary intervention to screen, diagnose and treat the huge number of people who are entirely dependent on these few institutions to get intervention at an affordable cost.

Cost involve in private settings have taken cardiac care beyond the

reach of poor, who are most vulnerable to death. Many people are dying simply because of they are unable to access timely care at reasonable cost, which could be preventable if services at government level are expanded.

Eminent cardiologist Professor Dr Md Afzalur Rahman, Head of Cardiology, Mitford Hospital said "Cardiology departments of government hospitals are seeing increasing number of patients by and by. But the facilities, setup and instrument are limited and need to be expanded to serve huge population. As there is huge burden of heart diseases, it is crucial to strengthen the existing services and establishing more services to cope with rising number of patients".

He also said, "Creating awareness among mass population is also an effective prevention strategy for a poor setting like us."

80 percent of deaths from cardiovascular illness are preventable by modifying nine risk factors, including smoking, abnormal cholesterol, diabetes, high blood pressure,

stress, abdominal obesity, sedentary lifestyle, eating too few fruits and vegetables and abstaining from alcohol.

People have misconception that heart diseases do not affect the youth. Unfortunately, recent studies have demystified the false belief. Consumption of junk food packed with saturated fat is the leading cause of obesity, which leads to heart disease in urban youth. However, studies show that 20 percent of adolescents with ideal body weight are also susceptible to cardiac disease if they pursue unhealthy lifestyles.

So, widespread distribution of messages and elimination of myths to keep heart healthy has a crucial role in preventing huge number of deaths for heart ailments. Along with extended cardiac services at affordable cost, launching of national campaign and strengthening the awareness programme can play a vital role in prevention of heart diseases.

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BANGLADESH THALASSAEMIA FOUNDATION  
A Thalassaemia patient is getting blood transfusion.

## Gene therapy success for anaemia patient

AFP, Paris

In a rare success for the much-headlined vision of gene therapy, scientists said recently they had corrected flawed DNA in an 18-year-old man suffering from a debilitating form of anaemia. The unnamed patient received a gene that corrected a blood disorder known as beta-thalassaemia and three years on, his health is "remarkable" and his quality of life good, they said.

Beta-thalassaemia occurs when a patient is unable to produce enough beta-globin, a component in haemoglobin, which is used by red blood cells to transport oxygen around the body. The body's organs, depriving of sufficient oxygen, can be badly damaged without regular, and lifelong, blood transfusions. The alternative treatment is bone marrow transplant, but only a small minority of patients have access to this because of difficulties in finding the right type of donor.

Reporting in the science journal Nature, doctors led by Philippe Leboulch of Harvard Medical School, used a virus as a "Trojan horse" to deliver a slice of DNA into cells which corrected for the flawed beta-LCR gene.

"At present, approximately three years post-transplantation, the biological and clinical evolution is remarkable and the patient's quality of life is good," they said. The patient, who had been received blood transfusions since the age of three, last received donated blood in June 2008, a year after the operation.

Gene therapy burst on the medical scene in the late 1990s, offering the allure of blocking or reversing inherited disease. So far, though, successes have been few, limited to single-gene disorders — as opposed to complex multi-gene disorders that account for the commonest diseases — and they have been carried out under tightly-controlled lab conditions.

They include six children, blighted by a retinal disease called Leber's congenital amaurosis and two adults with a so-called myeloid disorder, a disease of white blood cells.

## Guide for a first-aid provider

KAZI RAQUIBUL ISLAM

Sudden injury or illness can be fatal unless proper care is provided promptly. This prompt care before taking to a hospital is known as first aid. It does not replace the physician, but assists the victim to survive and reduce immediate complications before proper medical care is accessed.

Following steps are applicable in the guidance to first aid.

- Take charge or follow instructions. If you are first at the scene, instruct someone to obtain medical help and others to assist as directed. Do the opposite thing if you arrive after someone has arrived.
- Do not let many people gather in case of hazards.
- Give priorities in treating victims when there are several injured persons.
- Make a primary survey of the victim.
- Care for life-threatening condition.
- Make a secondary survey of the victim.
- Care for all injuries in order of need.
- Keep the injured person(s) lying down.
- Loosen restrictive clothing if necessary.
- When necessary, improvise first aid materials using whatever is available.
- Cover all wounds completely.
- Prevent air from reaching burned surfaces as quickly as possible by using a suitable dressing.
- Remove small and loose foreign objects by brushing away from the wound with a piece of sterile gauze.
- Do not try to remove embedded objects.
- Place a cover bandage over an open fracture without undue pressure before applying splints.
- Support and immobilise fractures and dislocation.
- Unless absolutely necessary, do not move the patient until fractures have been immobilised.
- Test a stretcher before use, carefully place an injured person on the stretcher, and carry the patient without any unnecessary movements.

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## WORLD HEART DAY 2010

# Take responsibility of your own heart health

PROFESSOR ABUL HUSSAIN KHAN CHOWDHURY

Two weeks after Eid celebration, the nation has been brought back to their usual routines of working life — the same stress of wading through traffic, dealing with work piled up after the break, working long hours to meet deadlines and complaining about rampant office politics. We spend more than half of our waking hours at our workplace, which leaves us very little time to do anything fruitful or enjoyable once we are at home. So incorporating healthy activities at the place where we spend time the most is crucial.

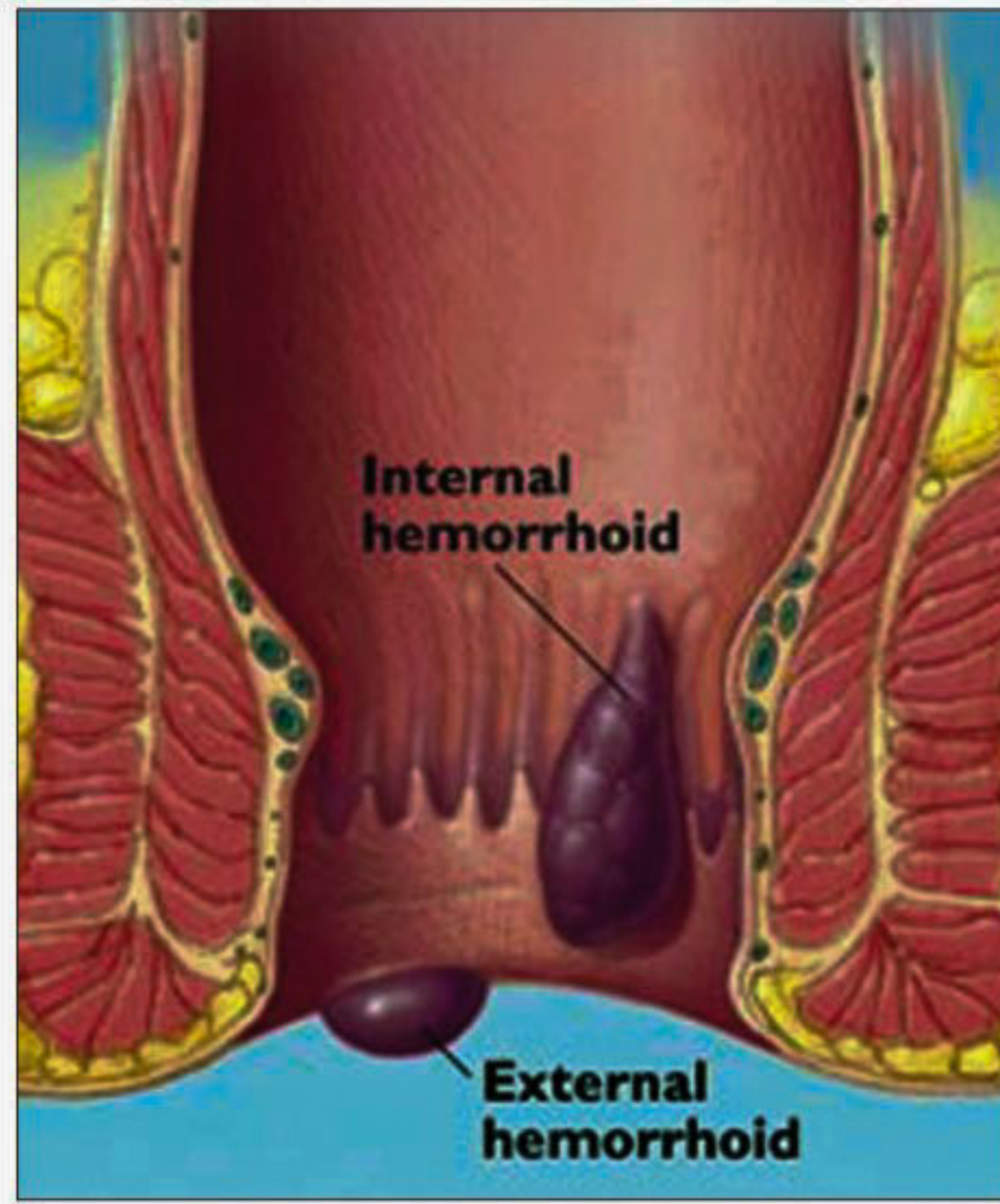
Realising the importance of the workplace as an ideal setting, to adopt healthy behaviours with a view to prevent heart disease and stroke, the World Heart Federation (WHF) has selected the theme of World Heart Day 2010 which is going to be observed tomorrow. With the theme "Workplace Wellness: Take responsibility for your own heart health", WHF has outlined 10 simple steps on how this can be



achieved. The first six are ways to lead a healthy life and the remaining four are ideas to make your workplace healthier:

- 1. Healthy food intake:** Eat at least 5 servings of fruit and vegetables a day and avoid saturated fat. Beware of processed foods, which often contain high levels of salt.
- 2. Get active and take heart:** Even 30 minutes of activity can help to prevent heart attacks and strokes and your work will benefit too.
- 3. Say no to tobacco:** Your risk of coronary heart disease will be halved within a year and will return to a normal level over time.
- 4. Maintain a healthy weight:** Weight loss, especially together with lowered salt intake, leads to lower blood pressure. High blood pressure is the number one risk factor for stroke and a major factor for approximately half of all heart disease and stroke.
- 5. Know your numbers:** Visit a doctor who will measure your blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose levels, together with waist-to-hip ratio and body mass index (BMI).
- 6. Limit your alcohol intake:** Restrict the amount of alcoholic drinks that you consume.
- 7. Insist on a smoke-free environment:** Demand the tobacco ban - ensure your workplace is 100 percent smoke-free.
- 8. Bring exercise to the workplace:** Include physical activity in your working schedule - cycle to work if this is possible, take the stairs, exercise or go for a walk during your lunch breaks, and encourage others to do so too.
- 9. Choose healthy food options:** Ask for healthy food at your work canteen, or find nearby cafes or restaurants that serve healthy meals
- 10. Encourage stress-free moments:** Whilst stress has not been shown to be a direct risk factor for heart disease and stroke, it is related to smoking, excessive drinking and unhealthy eating, which are risk factors for heart disease.

The writer is the Director of National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD).



## Ease from your piles

STAR HEALTH DESK

Hemorrhoids (also known as piles) occur when rectal veins become swollen, itchy, painful and tender, often from straining to move the bowels.

The American Gastroenterological Association says the following options may help control hemorrhoids:

- Add more fiber to your diet in the form of fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Drink plenty of liquids each day.
- Use a stool softener or fiber supplement.
- Soothe with a bath, cold pack or bed rest.
- Wipe gently with a moist tissue after a bowel movement.
- If symptoms continue, consult a colorectal surgeon.

## Knowing for better living

In Bangladesh...

almost **4 crore** people are suffering from various allergic disorders !

Avoid dust particles

Avoid allergic foods

Clean floor and bed regularly

Consult your Doctor

Courtesy...

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