

# An eye banking hub in the region

DR TAREQ SALAHUDDIN, back from Singapore

Singapore, a major aviation hub in Southeast Asia and one of the most attractive medical tourism country is playing a significant role in tissue banking in the region as well.

Medical tourists looking for a cornea transplant can look forward to an increased supply in Singapore if there is shortfall in supply in their own countries.

Singapore Eye Bank (SEB), a centre of excellence in cornea, eye banking and eye diseases performs a huge number of transplant round the year. It deals with the most sophisticated types of grafts.

In earlier days, if someone needed a cornea, s/he had to replace the whole cornea. Now technology has developed which permits replacing the damaged portion of the cornea only, which is in fact a great milestone in eye care.

The SEB is also exploring the use of keyhole corneal transplant surgery to pre-cut donor tissue in Singapore before having it couriered to meet the needs of



patients all over Asia. Endothelial Keratoplasty, as the procedure is known, will help reduce the length of treatment from six months to two to three weeks. There is also less risk of rejection and fewer side effects.

There is a severe lack of donor corneal tissue across Asia with waiting lists numbering up to the thousands in countries such as Thailand. Every year, a

large number of cornea transplant operations are performed in Singapore, half of them for foreign patients. Singaporeans are usually allocated corneas from Singaporeans, or they can source for them from the United States or the Philippines. But foreigners who come to Singapore for operations usually import them from mainly the US and the Philippines.

The corneas used in Singapore are not kept for more than seven days after they are harvested, to ensure they stay fresh. But corneas from the US take five to seven days to arrive in Asia. To overcome the problem, SEB has teamed up with Sri Lankan health authorities and set up an eye bank to procure cornea donations from that country.

This is done in partnership with the National Eye Hospital of Colombo and the Sri Lankan Ministry of Health. Sri Lanka has been a major provider of corneas since the 1960s, with its primarily Buddhist population regarding cornea donation as a meritorious act.

The SEB aims to restore Sri Lanka as a major provider of corneas to Asian countries and attain international accreditation by Association of Eye Banks of Asia (AEBA) standards.

Other countries can also start similar partnership programme for their own countries which could serve more people requiring the cornea transplant.

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## BOOK REVIEW

### Have a Nice Day: The column gets compiled

Have a nice day — The health column written by Dr Rubaiul Murshed in The Daily Star for more than a decade has been published as a book recently.

The book portrayed the ways to adopt healthy habits and presented the difficult technical terms into easy to understand language and in a lucid manner. The book predominantly covered articles related to healthy lifestyle and attitude. In fact, the book presented simple, but very essential health and fitness tips for the readers.

The book also talks about alternative, herbal and traditional medicine that may help people in a positive way. With long experience, as a healthcare management specialist, Dr Murshed also shared his insights and ideas for improving healthcare service delivery in Bangladesh.

Dr Murshed is currently the Chairman of healthprior21.com, a total healthcare information portal. He also wrote several other books including "Health Services Management for Developing Countries", "Public Health Management In Bangladesh" etc.

The book is available at The Daily Star Centre, Gyankosh book store, Omni book store at the airport, Ahmed Medical Centre, Dhanmondi, Dhaka.



## HEALTH bulletin

### Group backs HPV shot recommendation for boys

Boys 11 years and up should get vaccine to protect them against HPV infections, which can cause genital warts as well as oral, penile and anal cancers, recommended by U.S. vaccine advisers and updates the previous stance of the American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP).

HPV, or human papillomavirus, is the most common sexually transmitted disease in the U.S. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. At least half of all sexually active people will catch genital HPV at some point.

The infection usually does not cause any symptoms and goes away on its own. But certain types of the virus may cause genital warts and, rarely, cancer.

### Sleeping pills linked to increased death risk

Sleeping pills used by many people appear to be linked with a higher death risk, doctors warn. The American study in BMJ showed that death risk among users was about four times higher, although the absolute risk was still relatively low.



# Pacemaker for Parkinson's: New hope for the helpless

DR MD RAJIB HOSSAIN

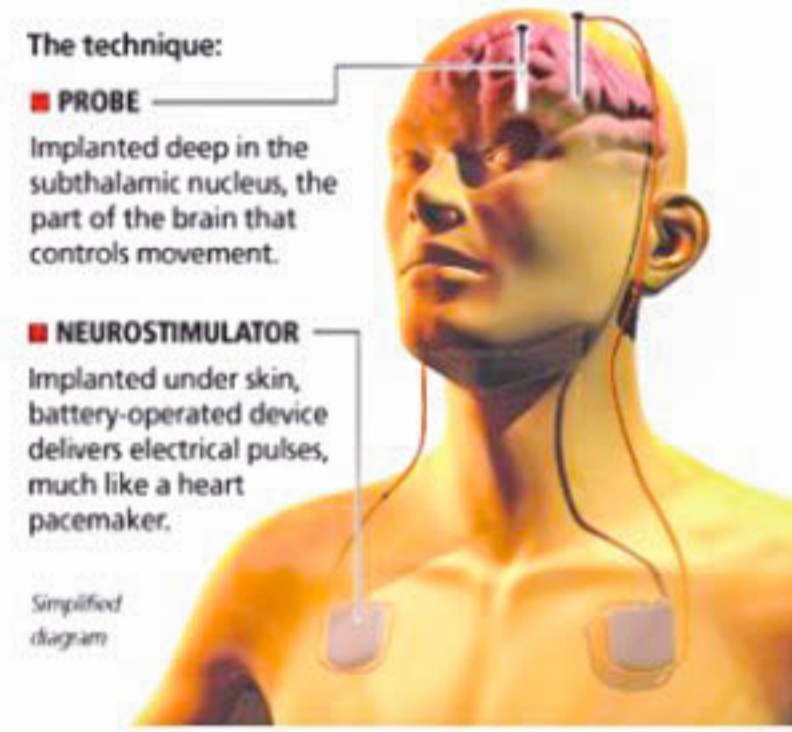
Most of us probably know about a pacemaker for heart that is installed into human body to maintain normal heart rate and rhythm. Like this, pacemaker has been emerging as a promising treatment for a brain disease called Parkinson's disease, a condition where people have tremor in hands, develop slowness, rigidity and difficulty in movement. This option with a pacemaker can provide remarkable relief to patients when medicine had very little benefit.

Parkinson's disease, which is named after an English doctor James Parkinson most often develops after age 50. It is one of the most common brain disorders of the elderly that can limit a person's working capability and leads to injury from fall.

Parkinson's disease occurs when the brain cells that make dopamine (A chemical help control muscle movement) are slowly destroyed. This leads to the loss of muscle function. Modern treatments are effective at managing the early symptoms of the disease, mainly through the use of medicine. The damage gets worse with time and hence the dose of medicine and

### Deep brain stimulation

A surgical technique, deep brain stimulation, has proven effective in reducing the disabling tremors in many Parkinson's disease patients, but doctors really aren't sure how it works. A UTSA professor has published a new theory explaining the technique's success.



addition of new medicine are required by and by.

In many instances, as the disease progressed, medicine does not work well and also produce unwanted side effects that further complicate the disease. In this circumstance, a pacemaker that provides electrical impulses to specific parts of the brain to control abnormal rigid movement of the disease can make a significant improvement.

The procedure called Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) surgery involves computer-guided placement of two electrodes into the brain that are connected to a pacemaker placed

just below the collarbone on the left side. The similar treatment can also be applied in spinal cord to treat chronic back pain, epilepsy etc.

"With the advancement of technology, brain pacemaker for Parkinson's disease has been modernised with ultra thin electrode connected to pacemaker and rechargeable battery. The surgical complications have also reduced dramatically. The disease is no longer a crippling one. More patients are returning back to their working life with full capacity after the surgery", said eminent neurosurgeon from India Dr Sujoy Sanyal who came for a short visit in Bangladesh recently.

Dr Sanyal who mainly works at Rabindranath Tagore Hospital, Kolkata, cautioned that patient should be evaluated beforehand the operation by an experienced surgeon to look for the benefit of the surgery, as all patients are not suitable candidate like those having dementia or other contraindications of brain surgery.

He stated that the surgery is getting popularity and more patients are interested to go back to a functional life; they want a radical relief from crippling Parkinson's.

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## Free HIV treatment for foreign nationals

Campaigners say the move in England will reduce the risk of Britons being infected and cut the costs of more expensive later treatment. Currently only British residents are eligible, which excludes migrants. The Department of Health said there would be safeguards against "health tourism".

There are an estimated 25,000 people with undiagnosed HIV in Britain, many of whom were born abroad. People from overseas cannot be treated for the condition unless they pay, which is not the case for other infectious diseases. This group of people includes failed asylum seekers, students and tourists.

Conservative former cabinet minister Lord Fowler, who headed the government's Aids awareness campaign in the 1980s, has called for an amendment to the Health and Social Care Bill currently before the Lords.

This would extend free treatment to those who have been in Britain for six months. The proposal will be introduced by the government in a Statutory Instrument rather than as part of the legislation.

Source: BBC

## Knowing for better living

You can reduce **30%** risk of cancer death!

Maintain a healthy body weight

Exercise regularly

Avoid tobacco use

Take lots of vegetables & fruits

Avoid alcohol use



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