

# Prevent blindness, check your risk for eye diseases

**DR MUHAMMAD RAJIB HOSSAIN**  
Worldwide, about 285 million people are visually impaired and 80 percent of them are either preventable or treatable. Most of the people who go blind or living horrible life with visual impairment could have a better life and enjoy a delighted world. Little precaution and timely preventive measure could save millions of people from unnecessary loss of vision. Most of the people have visual impairment due to the certain diseases including cataract, uncorrected refractive error, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy etc. The key is to learn our risk for developing those diseases and consult an ophthalmologist to diagnose at early stage and take necessary steps to prevent or halt the disease progression. **Cataract:** The most common cause of blindness in Bangla-

desh and in other developing countries. Cataract — a condition when our eye lens gradually becomes cloudy that manifests as white or gray opacity in the eye. It leads to blurring of vision, night glares, ultimate loss of vision by and by. Cataracts are very common in older people. However, there is highly effective and low cost surgery available to remove the cloudy lens and replace with an artificial one. It can restore vision like any normal people. Due to widespread misconception and ignorance about services, many people are mission out of the gift of modern medical science which is available and cost-effective. **Uncorrected refractive errors:** Globally, uncorrected refractive errors are the main cause of visual impairment. Refractive errors occur when the eye is unable to properly focus images

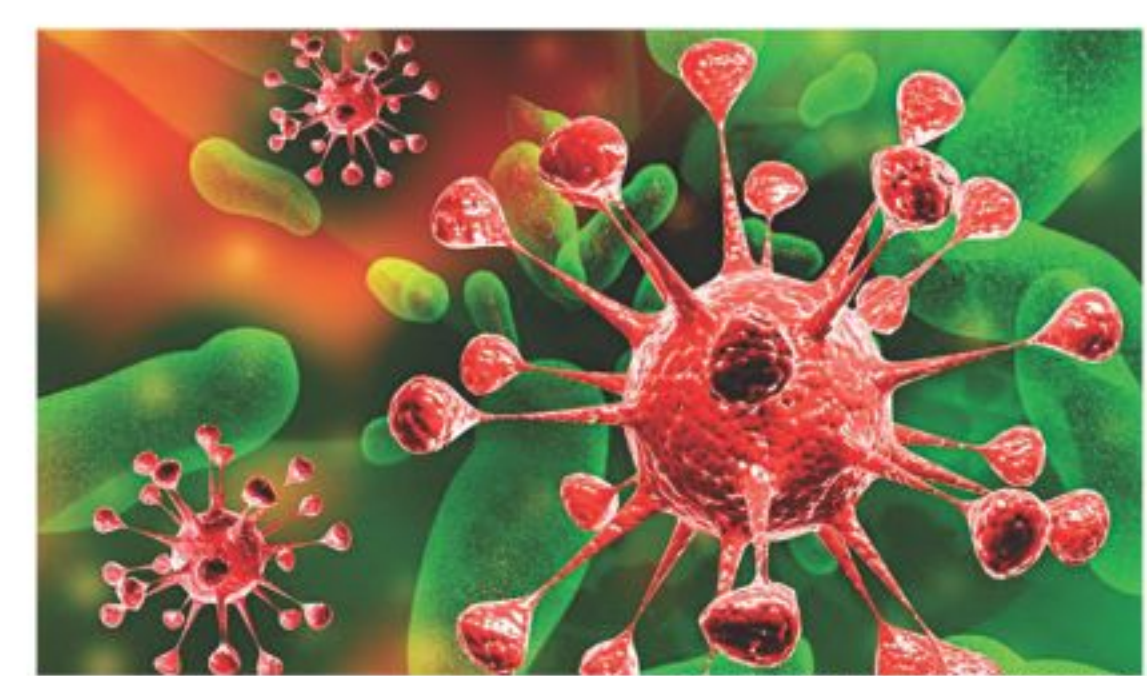


on the retina, resulting in blurred vision. Some people have difficulty in seeing distant objects that a normal person can see (called myopia). Some can see distant object more clearly than near one (called hyperopia or farsightedness). Other people have both problems or problem with reading at an older age (presbyopia). Refractive errors can be easily corrected with simple glasses or

rarely other refractive interventions. However, due to a lack of awareness or recognition by the individual or family, limited availability and cultural stigmas that discourage the use of glasses, leads to increase magnitude of the problem. **Glaucoma:** Glaucoma is a silent killer that can destroy sight without much symptoms. It occurs when normal fluid pressure inside eyes

slowly rises. Virtually, everyone is at risk of glaucoma. However, certain groups including older than 60 years, family history, Asian, people wearing high powered eye glass, steroid drug use, high blood pressure etc. are at higher risk than others. Regular eye exams annually, especially for high risk individuals are the best form of prevention against significant glaucoma damage. **Diabetic retinopathy:** With the increase in prevalence of diabetes, eye damage due to diabetes known as diabetic retinopathy has been increased significantly. The longer someone has diabetes, the more likely s/he will get diabetic retinopathy. Eye exam at least once a year for the diabetics is recommended to prevent irreversible vision loss. **E-mail: rajib.hossain@thedailystar.net**

## NEW INFORMATION



## Brain eating amoeba, a scary bug

STAR HEALTH DESK

After the tragic death of 10 people in Pakistan, brain-eating amoeba is now striking terror in the heart of many people. It is a single celled organism called *Naegleria fowleri*. It has a fatality rate of more than 98 percent. It literally consumes brain cells by sucking them through a straw-like appendage. It lives and thrives primarily in warm freshwater that is unclean. It is transmitted when this contaminated water enters the body through the nose but cannot be passed person-to-person. Symptoms are initially very mild, including a headache, stiff neck, fever and stomach pain. Death usually occurs five to seven days after infection. Experts recommended that people should avoid getting water too deep into their nostrils and make sure their water supply is properly treated to avoid the transmission.

## HEALTH bulletin



### Global call on mental healthcare

Nearly 450 million people have mental health disorders and more than three-quarters live in developing countries. According to the World Health Organisation, 8 in every 10 of those living in developing nations receive no treatment at all. Experts around the globe are calling for a joint effort to tackle the world's leading cause of suffering and disability — mental health disorders.

### Gene tied to obesity, depression

Researchers have identified a genetic mutation that is linked to mental illness and obesity, according to a study appeared in the journal Archives of General Psychiatry. The researchers found that deletion of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) is associated with anxiety, depression and obesity. BDNF is a nervous system growth factor that plays an important role in brain development.

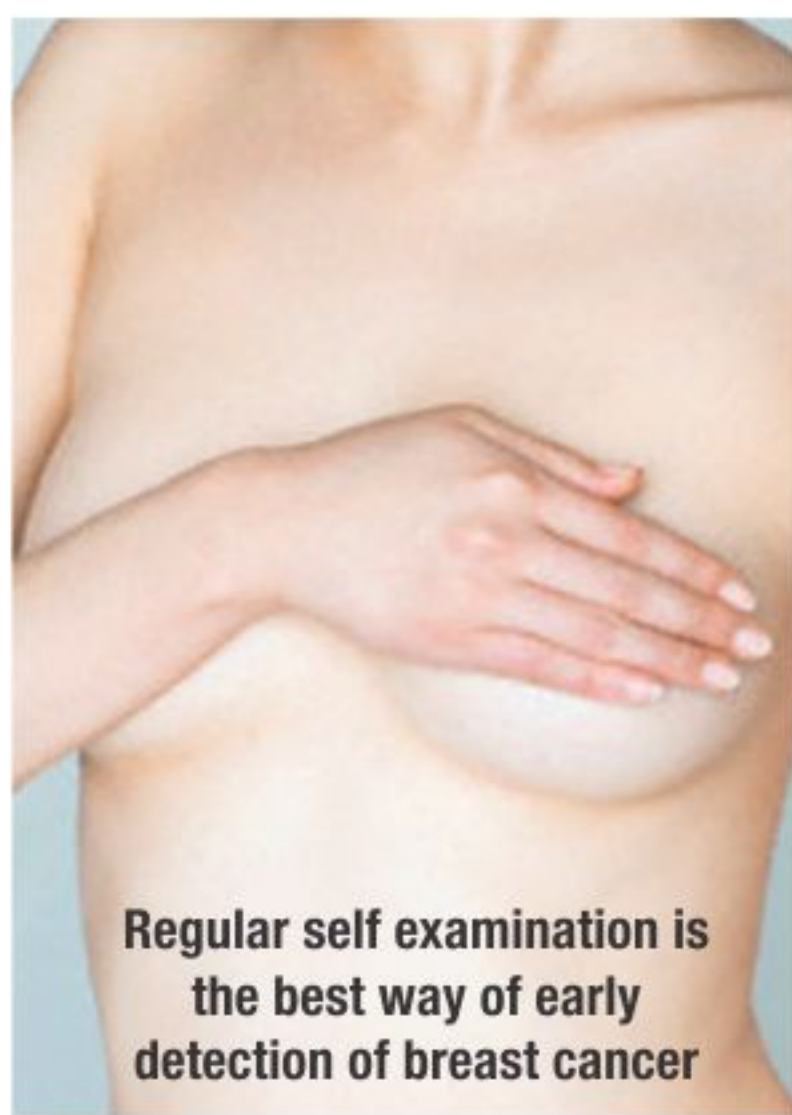
## Breast cancer care in Bangladesh needs radical change

**DR TASMIA TAHMID**

It is estimated that one in fourteen women will be diagnosed with breast cancer at some point in their lives with incidence projected to rise in South-East Asia. Current service provision in our practices lack screening, diagnosis and treatment option delivery to patients in appropriate manner.

Outcomes for Bangladeshi Breast cancer patients are worse than India, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia. Reasons for this include poor communication between professionals in different care settings, and inadequate planning and coordination of care between specialists. The establishment of networks, stressing the importance of multi-disciplinary consultations and management and to recognise the importance of collecting high quality, comprehensive cancer registration data are essential for delivering a quality cancer care.

We need to set out a vision to improve cancer services to become and stay comparable with other countries with a programme of investment and service improvement. Significant resources need to be allocated to improving standards. More need to be done to ensure our cancer services become



Regular self examination is the best way of early detection of breast cancer

trustworthy in the world. Providing world-class services across the whole of Bangladesh, and to address the existing inequalities between centres to centres and doctors to doctors require radical change with the support from everybody. Over the next 20 years, the cancer burden will increase. Cancer incidence, prevalence and mortality will varyably change due to many reasons. The earlier cancer is diagnosed and treated, the greater the likelihood of survival, meaning earlier diagnosis has the potential to save lives. Primary care has limited diagnos-

tic facilities to exclude a diagnosis of cancer and there are no clear protocols for acting on the receipt of abnormal results in secondary care. Screening makes an important contribution to the early diagnosis of breast cancers. For example, over a third of breast cancer cases are detected through the breast screening programme in London. Drivers for changes are enhancement of multidisciplinary work and developments in imaging facilities. Improving cancer treatments will demand increasing sub-specialisation in many areas. These include medical and clinical oncology, using new surgical techniques, imaging, histopathology and the use of increasingly sophisticated technologies. This will require hospitals to employ more appropriately highly trained clinical staff. The delivery of world-class cancer care is dependent on factors beyond excellence in clinical service delivery. Evidence from the top cancer centres in the world indicates that research and development, teaching and training need to be embedded in service delivery. The future sustainability of world-class cancer care in Bangladesh depends on harnessing these synergies. **The writer is a Breast Surgeon. E-mail: tasmiaatamid@aol.com**

## HEALTH NEWS



Save the Children community health workers dealing with health problems

## P&G ties with Save the Children to fight pneumonia

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Procter & Gamble (P&G), one of the leaders in cough and cold products worldwide ties with Save the Children to help better prevention, diagnosis and treatment of pneumonia in Bangladesh. The Vicks Breathe for Life Project of P&G will provide accessible healthcare services for up to 75,000 children in Bangladesh, where pneumonia is among the top three causes of death in children under five. It will also support to strengthen the work at community level to train health workers on proper pneumonia diagnosis and treatment and to provide educational programmes.



## Knowing for better living

### In Bangladesh...

Incidence of premature birth & congenital birth defects are increasing day by day!

- Ensure adequate nutrition for pregnant mother
- Keep away pregnant mother from stressful situation
- Ensure adequate rest for pregnant mother
- Avoid smoking & exposure to smoke
- Keep away pregnant mother from infection
- Avoid conception before 18 & above 40 years of age
- Consult your Doctor



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