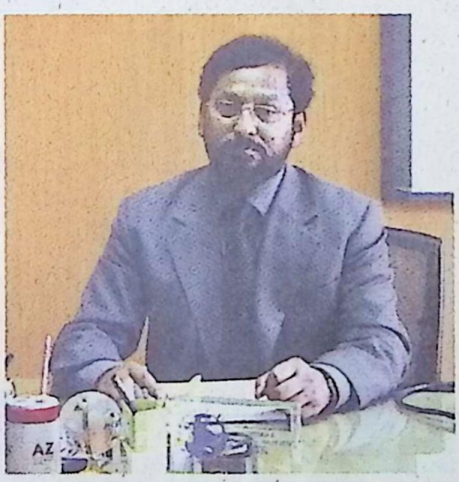
of people suffering from kidney related health problems, Samad estimates that there are roughly 20 million who fall victim to these diseases. "There are two types of kidney diseases, acute kidney injury or acute renal failure (ARF) and chronic kidney disease (CKD). ARF occurs when there is a sudden loss of kidney function due to traumatic injury causing loss of blood, the sudden decrease of blood flow to the kidneys and damage from certain types of drugs or toxins, damage to the kidney caused by a severe infection called sepsis which sends the kidney into shock. It can also happen due to obstruction of the flow of urine which may be caused by an enlarged prostate, pregnancy complications (eclampsia and pre-eclamsia) or related HELLP Syndrome.



Children are vulnerable to kidney disease.



Dr M A Samad

CKD occurs when the damage to the kidney causing decreasing functioning lasts for longer than 3 months. This condition is considered dangerous as the symptoms may not start to appear until irreparable kidney damage has been done. This disease can be caused by Diabetes (type 1 and 2) and high blood pressure. Other culprits are lupus and a chronic viral illness for example HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B and C, severe infection within the kidneys known as pyelonephritis, more than a few episodes of which can cause kidney damage. Inflammation in the glomeruli within the kidneys, polycystic kidney disease in which fluid filled cysts form in the kidneys (this is a quite common hereditary) kidney disease, congenital defects which are present at birth often result in urinary tract obstruction or malformation that effects the kidneys. Drugs and toxins, which includes long term exposure to certain medicans and chemicals and the use of intravenous street drugs are also responsible for CKD.

"In developed countries, kidney related illnesses mostly affect the elderly population," says Samad. "In a developing country like ours, it is quite different. Children as young as 7 can be affected because they are prone to diarrhoea, young women can be affected by it during pregnancy due to unhygienic food and birthing conditions. Abortion clinics are also extremely unhygienic and can cause severe infection," he explains. "Our people are also exposed to malaria, typhoid, dengue, yellow fever, influenza, venomous snake bites, spider and caterpillar bites as well as bee stings all of which can cause severe kidney damage if not treated properly."

According to Samad, Bangladeshis are also exposed to threats of road accidents, victims of which are often not brought to hospitals immediately afterwards, due to poor roads, traffic jams, lack of resources etc. "By the time they come to us, the patients have suffered severe blood loss and this causes permanent kidney damage," he says. "Food adulteration is another phenomenon we are victims of. Many of these foods cause kidney, liver, heart, stomach, lung and throat problems."

Due to endless threats coming from all aspects of our lives, it is important to raise awareness among people to be careful in their day to day lives in order to prevent/manage a kidney disease. "This can be done by following a strict diet of unadulterated food, drinking plenty of boiled water and going to local clinics for child delivery so that doctors can monitor and manage blood loss during delivery," advises Samad. "The government must also provide increased resources to doctors, to provide medication and have anti-venom available at each clinic for snake and other bites. People should also be discouraged from depending only on herbal treatment which can sometimes do more harm than good. They should also refrain from seeking help from witch doctors (*ojha or kabiraj*). There should be more hospitals available at every district so that victims of road accidents may get immediate medical attention, and last but not least, no medication should be taken without consulting a doctor and acquiring a prescription first."

Kidney diseases often multiply into diseases of the heart, brain, vascular diseases etc. Once there is kidney failure, the treatment, which is either dialysis or a transplant, becomes extremely expensive. "Out of the estimated 20 million, only 5 percent can probably afford the treatment," says Samad, "The other 95 percent don't make it." Early detection of kidney diseases can save up to 60 percent of these people and for this reason raising awareness is the key to fighting permanent damage to an important organ. ■