

A father and son's approach to tackling a health crisis

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As father and son, we represent two connected fields of medicine. Dr. Ahsan, a Professor of Cardiology, has spent decades treating heart disease, while Tasnif, a Johns Hopkins graduate, works as Director of Value-Based Care at Kidney Specialists of Southern Nevada. Our paths converge around a devastating "triad" of diseases: Cardiovascular Disease (CVD), Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD), and Diabetes Mellitus (DM). Together, they form a destructive cycle that is claiming lives worldwide, especially in low- and middle-income countries like Bangladesh.

On this World Heart Day 2025, themed "Don't Miss a Beat," we share insights and an action plan to break this cycle.

WORLD HEART DAY: ORIGINS AND CONTEXT

World Heart Day began in 2000 through the World Heart Federation and WHO, with the goal of raising global awareness about heart health. Today, it is more relevant than ever. CVD, CKD, and diabetes are soaring in Bangladesh, driven by rising obesity, high blood pressure, and poor access to healthcare. Weak health systems, delayed treatment, and lack of awareness compound the burden.

THE VICIOUS CYCLE

These three diseases do not act in isolation.

They feed into each other.

- Diabetes damages the kidneys by injuring their delicate blood vessels (glomeruli), making it the leading cause of chronic kidney disease and kidney failure.

- CKD fuels cardiovascular risk by raising blood pressure and leaving toxins in the blood, greatly increasing heart attack and stroke risks.

- Heart disease can worsen kidney function by reducing blood flow and increasing pressure in the kidneys, leading to progressive damage and failure.

This cycle is especially lethal in South Asians, who have a higher genetic risk of diabetes and heart disease. Patients caught in it face sharply increased chances of disability and premature death.

THE "4 D'S" FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

We believe the fight against this triad rests on four pillars:

1. Diet & Exercise

A balanced diet low in processed foods, sugar, and sodium controls blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar. Even 30 minutes of brisk walking daily can improve heart health and insulin sensitivity. Lifestyle improvement is the foundation of prevention.

2. Discipline

Knowledge means little without action. Discipline is taking medicines regularly, checking sugar levels, and choosing healthier

meals daily. Consistency is what turns medical advice into real results.

3. Drugs

We are in a breakthrough era. Newer medications such as SGLT2 inhibitors and GLP-1 agonists do more than control sugar; they protect both heart and kidneys, slow disease progression, and reduce mortality. Alongside standard blood pressure and cholesterol medicines, they represent a paradigm shift in treatment.

4. Dialogue

No patient fights this alone. Success requires ongoing dialogue with family and care teams—primary doctors, cardiologists, nephrologists, and dietitians. Coordinated, patient-centered care ensures treatment fits both medical needs and lifestyle.

A CALL TO ACTION

Globally, CVD kills 18 million people each year—more than all cancers combined. CKD affects over 850 million adults, often silently, with heart disease as their leading cause of death. In Bangladesh, where diabetes and hypertension are rising rapidly, the consequences are stark.

The economic and human toll demands national strategies: prevention programs, early screening, affordable access to modern drugs, and integrated care models. Investing in awareness campaigns and primary care capacity is far cheaper than the cost

of dialysis, heart failure admissions, and premature deaths.

OUR "3-D" BLUEPRINT FOR BANGLADESH

For long-term impact, we propose three interconnected commitments:

1. Diet & Exercise – Reclaim balanced eating and daily activity. Cut excess rice, sugar, and fried foods; embrace whole grains, fish, lentils, and fresh vegetables. Movement, especially walking, climbing stairs, remains the cheapest, most effective prescription.

2. Discipline – Build a culture of accountability. Medication adherence, routine check-ups, and daily lifestyle choices are the real frontline defense.

3. Drugs – For those already diagnosed, modern medicine offers more than symptom control, new therapies protect organs and save lives. Adhering to prescribed drugs for diabetes, blood pressure, and cholesterol sharply lowers the risk of heart attack, stroke, and kidney failure. On this World Heart Day, the message for Bangladesh is clear: the threat is real, but preventable. By embracing the "3-D" approach of Diet, Discipline, and Drugs, we can safeguard our families and build a healthier future, one heart at a time.

A MESSAGE OF URGENCY AND HOPE

The CVD-CKD-diabetes triad is not destiny.



DR. CHOWDHURY H. AHSAN

On this World Heart Day, the message for Bangladesh is clear: the threat is real, but preventable.

With prevention, discipline, and the right therapies, the cycle can be broken. On this World Heart Day, let us commit to protecting ourselves and our families, one step and one beat at a time.

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DR. JAGAT NARULA,
President of World Heart Foundation

The theme for World Heart Day 2025 is "Don't Miss a Beat" There are risk factors that have cumulative effects that lead to adverse cardiovascular events. We need to recognize them, address them and prevent bad outcomes. Dr Jagat Narula, President of World Heart Foundation sums it up:

"Let us be risk-averse. And, yes, I have heard people blaming age as an inevitable cause of heart disease, but age reflects length of exposure to unhealthy choices. Let us age well. Don't Miss a Beat"






**With Love & Care
LIFE BEATS
EVERYWHERE**


1 in 5 people in Bangladesh dies from heart disease, and even relatively young individuals are at risk. Reducing this risk requires awareness and proper heart care.

On this World Heart Day, let us pledge to protect every heartbeat so that life thrives in good health. On behalf of Unico Hospitals PLC, we extend our warm wishes to everyone on World Heart Day.

1 IN 5 PREMATURE DEATHS ARE CAUSED BY CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE.

DON'T MISS A BEAT.



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