Diabetic retinopathy must be detected on time to avoid loss of vision

Many remain unaware till the issue reaches an advanced stage, where vision once lost cannot be regained

New Delhi, 05 August 2017: India has already been accorded the status of the diabetes capital of the world, with about 65 million Indians suffering from this disorder. Statistics indicate that about 40% of those with diabetes will suffer from diabetic retinopathy at some point in time. As per the IMA, although diabetic retinopathy was always one of the associated complications of diabetes, its incidence has seen a rise in recent years. The condition can exacerbate if steps are not taken on time.

Diabetic retinopathy occurs from damage to the tiny blood vessels that nourish the retina. They leak blood and other fluids and cause swelling of the retinal tissue thereby leading to clouding of vision. This condition usually affects both the eyes.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, “Diabetic retinopathy is the major cause of blindness in patients with diabetes mellitus. However, it is largely a preventable or avoidable cause of blindness. Some factors that increase the risk of acquiring this condition include poor glycemic control, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol levels. In most patients, diabetic retinopathy is usually asymptomatic or may cause only very mild symptoms, to begin with. Due to this reason, many people living with diabetes remain unaware until the disease reaches an advanced stage and it becomes too late for treatment. Vision that has been lost cannot be restored. It is imperative that people with diabetes undergo regular screening to detect retinopathy. Early intervention is very important to prevent visual impairment and blindness.”

Diabetic retinopathy is included in the list of eye diseases that can be prevented and treated if detected early under ‘VISION 2020: The Right to Sight’ global joint initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB).

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, “Although its symptoms become noticeable only once the disease advances, there are some common things one can look out for including sudden changes in vision / blurred vision, eye floaters and spots, double vision, and eye pain. Laser surgery is often
used in the treatment of diabetic eye disease, but each stage of diabetic retinopathy can be treated in a different way.”

Few steps can reduce the chances of vision loss due to diabetic retinopathy.

**Controlling blood sugar levels** It is good to keep blood sugar levels in a target range through a healthy diet, frequent monitoring of blood sugar levels, and adequate physical activity

**Control blood pressure** One of the associated complications of this disorder is macular edema which occurs in those with high blood pressure. Therefore, keep the levels in the right range.

**Get an eye examination regularly** Get your eyes checked regularly. Though screening for diabetic retinopathy and other eye problems will not prevent diabetic eye disease, it can help you in timely treatment.

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**About IMA:** Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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