



INDIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (HQS.)

(Registered under the Societies Act XXI of 1860)

Mutually Affiliated with the British & Nepal Medical Associations

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Press Release

Timely diagnosis of congenital heart disease imperative for right treatment

About 1.8 lakh babies in India are born with congenital heart disease, which may occur due to genetic factors

New Delhi, 24 June 2017: About 8 out of every 1000 children in India are born with a congenital heart disease (CHD) resulting in about 1.8 lakh babies born every year with a CHD. Of these, about 60,000 to 90,000 have critical CHD, which requires an immediate intervention. Children with high-risk CHD can die if not diagnosed in time and this makes early diagnosis extremely important. Some children with uncorrected heart defect may survive into adulthood and require intervention later.

Congenital heart disease is a result of a defect in the formation of the heart. Care should be taken to avoid medications or alcohol etc. that are likely to interfere with organ formation in the fetus to lower the risk of CHD. Newborns with critical CHD exhibit symptoms that can be identified soon after birth. However, in some cases diagnosis is not possible till a later time.

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 "Certain medications such as retinoic acid for acne, alcohol or drug abuse during pregnancy, and poorly controlled blood sugar in women who have diabetes during pregnancy increase the risk of CHD in the baby. Although the exact cause is not known, CHD may be genetic and get passed down through families. Although not entirely preventable, it is possible for children with CHD to lead active and productive lives with timely diagnosis and the right treatment. Though there is a good success rate for treatments, it is important to diagnose this condition early enough and reach the hospital on time. However, most of the times babies are diagnosed much later and reach the hospital in a critical stage. This reduces the efficacy of treatments."

It is possible to detect any structural abnormalities in the fetus, including in the heart, with the help of a level-II ultrasound in the second trimester.

Adding further, **Dr Aggarwal**, said, "It is imperative to make testing for CHD a standard practice in hospitals before babies are discharged. As a part of the efforts to save lives of children with CHD, the HCFI under its flagship project, the Sameer Malik Heart Care Foundation Fund, has saved over

500 lives in the past two years. This fund was initiated towards ensuring that no one dies of a heart disease just because they cannot afford treatment."

Though it is not possible to prevent the likelihood of CHD in babies, there are some precautions that mothers can take during pregnancy.

- Get vaccinated against rubella and flu
- Avoid drinking alcohol or taking drugs
- Taking folic acid supplement during the first trimester relatively lowers the risk of giving birth to a baby with CHD or any other birth defects.
- Do not take any over the counter (OTC) medication including herbal remedies without consulting your doctor.
- Avoid contact with people who have any infection.
- Women with diabetes should try and keep the condition under check.
- Avoid exposure to organic solvents, such as those used in dry cleaning, paint thinners, and nail polish remover.

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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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