Lack of awareness impediments treatment of Parkinson's disease

Disease causes 60% to 80% of dopamine-producing cells to become damaged

New Delhi, 25 June 2017: According to a report published in the International Journal Of Nutrition, Pharmacology, Neurological Diseases out of every 1, 00,000 people in India, 70 have Parkinson’s disease. What is alarming is that the brain has already lost more than half of its dopamine-producing cells, by the time the characteristic symptoms develop in patients. The symptoms of this disease are so subtle that it can remain undiagnosed for years.

Parkinson's disease is a neurodegenerative disorder that is chronic and progressive. It occurs when the nerve cells in the brain stop producing dopamine, a chemical which helps in controlling movement. Dopamine helps in the smooth transmission of messages to different parts of the brain and regulates body movements in healthy adults. When a person develops this disease, about 60% to 80% of the dopamine-producing cells get damaged.

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, "The main impediment to managing Parkinson's is the lack of awareness about this condition. This disease generally affects those who are above the age of 60 and the risk increases with age. The symptoms can vary from person to person. Some early stage symptoms include very slight shaking of hands, difficulty in walking and/or postural imbalance. The four key motor symptoms of Parkinson’s disease include tremors (hands, arms, legs, jaw); stiffness or rigidity (arms, legs, trunk); slowness of movement; and postural imbalance (poor balance and coordination). This is a progressive disorder but not life threatening. However, people with Parkinson’s disease may be unable to perform daily movement related functions and eventually stop working due to progressively disabling symptoms."

Diagnosis of Parkinson's can be done through a 99mTc-TRODAT-1 SPECT scan of the brain. Early detection is very important in minimizing dopamine loss in the brain and maintaining muscle function.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, "While there is no cure for Parkinson's disease as yet, treatment can definitely help people live a good quality life, provided the diagnosis is done at the right time. The decision to start taking medicine, and which medicine to take, varies from person to person."
Tips for people with Parkinson's disease

- Simplify daily tasks and set realistic goals.
- Plan activities such as household chores, exercise, and recreation well in time. Distribute them throughout the day.
- Take some rest before and after any activity.
- Do not plan activities right after a meal. Rest for 20 to 30 minutes after each meal.
- Divide your work among friends and family. Do not hesitate to ask for help.
- Get proper sleep and elevate your head when sleeping.
- Avoid extreme physical activity or lift heavy objects.

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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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