Osteoarthritis prevalence showing an upward trend in India

- India expected to become the osteoarthritis capital by 2025
- Weight loss key to managing this condition

New Delhi, 10 May 2017: Statistics indicate that India records more than 10 million cases of osteoarthritis on an annual basis. With over 60 million cases, the country is expected to turn into the osteoarthritis capital of the world by 2025. Osteoarthritis is the most common musculoskeletal disorder with major health and socioeconomic impact in older people. It usually progresses slowly, but some patients experience a more rapid progression.

Osteoarthritis is also called the degenerative joint disease or degenerative arthritis, and can affect any joint. However, it mostly affects the knees, hips, lower back, neck, and small joints of the fingers. Medication and physiotherapy are the common treatment modes and if the pain is not relieved, the person may be bedridden as well. Currently, acute cases are treated through a surgery involving a transplant.

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, "Osteoarthritis is a debilitating condition and the common risk factors include increasing age, obesity, previous joint injury, overuse of the joint, weak thigh muscles, and genes. The symptoms build up gradually, the most common being pain and stiffness especially in the morning. Being overweight or obese can cause rapid deterioration of the cartilage in the knee, leading to osteoarthritis. With every one unit increase in the body mass index (BMI), the chances of rapid cartilage loss increase by 11%.

Weight loss is probably the most important factor to slow disease progression. Danger of developing osteoarthritis is another reason to control weight. Dr Aggarwal opined, "Do not let yourself get heavy or overweight. Keeping your weight under control through diet and exercise or weight-loss surgery could prevent the need for knee-replacement surgery."

Exercise can help reduce weight and therefore the risk of acquiring osteoarthritis. The simplest exercises are often the best. One can try these three kinds of exercises to manage weight and keep the joints free of pain.
- Stretching: helps ease aches and pains and provides movement to the joints
- Strengthening exercises: help the muscles in supporting the joints and keep them in the right position during movement.
- Fitness exercises: can help in weight management and reduce the risk of osteoarthritis.

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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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