Diastolic heart failure on the rise

This is another form of heart failure where the blood–pumping ability of the heart remains near normal. This second form of heart failure is too often overlooked and is just as lethal.

New Delhi, Dec 02, 2016: Heart failure is routinely described as the progressive loss of ability of the heart to pump blood. However, in diastolic heart failure, the pumping compliance of the heart is preserved but there is defect in the relaxing capability of the heart muscle with every beat.

In this condition the heart muscle becomes thickened. The chamber inside gets smaller and the heart is unable to relax to accommodate the blood it needs to pump out. As there is no room for the heart to relax, the blood backs up into the lungs.

Padma Shri Awardee Dr. K.K Aggarwal, President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and National President Elect Indian Medical Association (IMA), stated that, “This kind of anomaly is not picked up by standard measurements of “ejection fraction” — the percentage of blood in the heart that goes out with every beat. For patients, the symptoms of both types of heart failure are the same: Shortness of breath, difficulty exercising and fluid retention in the body. Physicians cannot make a diagnosis on the basis of symptoms or routine examinations. One has to have an echocardiogram and see the heart pumping and see if the ejection fraction is normal or reduced.”

Until now, relatively little attention has been paid to diastolic heart failure. Advances have been made against systolic heart failure, in which the ejection fraction falls below normal but not much has been done about diastolic heart failure.

“The death rate for this kind of heart failure matches that of patients with the more common form of heart failure, with more than 20% of all the patients dying within a year. There is a steady increase over 15 years of heart failure with normal or near–normal ejection fraction. For patients with advanced heart failure waiting for cardiac transplant, biventricular pacing not only improves the quality of life but also prolongs life. If the ejection fraction is low the combo device also gives an electric shock when the heart stops. It is advised that all patients with low ejection fraction should ask their doctors for possible implantation of these devices”, added Dr. K.K Aggarwal.

Signals of heart failure

One of the most common presentations is breathlessness on exertion, which is often confused as a part of aging or being obese. Not being able to climb stairs may be the earliest sign of hypertensive diastolic heart failure. Other signals are:

- Feeling extra tired even after a good night’s sleep. People with heart failure may limit activities they like to do or take naps to avoid feeling tired.
- Weight gain: Call your doctor if you gain weight for more than 2 days in a row or if you gain 2 or more pounds.
- Shortness of breath: Heart failure makes breathing harder, especially during exercise. Lying position may make it worse.
- Swollen ankles, legs, belly, and/or lower back, the swelling is often worse at the end of the day.
- Urinating more at night.

**About Heart Care Foundation of India**

Initiated in 1986, the Heart Care Foundation of India is a leading National NGO working in the field of creating mass health awareness among people from all walks of life and providing solutions for India's everyday healthcare needs. The NGO uses consumer-based entertainment modules to impart health education and increase awareness amongst people. A leading example of this is the Perfect Health Mela; an annual event started in 1993 that is attended by over 2-3 lakh people each year. The Mela showcases activities across categories such as health education seminars and check-ups, entertainment programs, lifestyle exhibitions, lectures, workshops, and competitions. In addition to this, the NGO conducts programs and camps to train people on the technique of hands only CPR through its CPR 10 mantra for revival after a sudden cardiac arrest. They currently hold three Limca book of world records for the maximum number of people trained in hands-only CPR in one go. Keeping article 21 of the Indian Constitution in mind, which guarantees a person Right to Life, Heart Care Foundation of India has also recently initiated a project called the Sameer Malik Heart Care Foundation Fund to ensure that no one dies of a heart disease just because they cannot afford treatment.

**For more information, please contact**

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