Passive smoking increases dementia risk

People exposed to secondhand smoke may face as much as a 44 percent increased risk of developing dementia.

New Delhi, Dec 24, 2016: A study from Peninsula Medical School in Exeter, England published in the British Medical Journal has shown an association between cognitive function and exposure to passive smoking. The risk increases with the amount of exposure to secondhand smoke. For people at the highest levels of exposure, the risk is probably higher.

The study collected data on more than 4,800 nonsmokers who were over 50 years old and tested saliva samples from these people for levels of cotinine, a product of nicotine that can be found in saliva for about 25 hours after exposure to smoke.

The researchers found that people with the highest cotinine levels had a 44 percent increased risk of cognitive impairment, compared with people with the lowest cotinine levels. And, while the risk of impairment was lower in people with lower cotinine levels, the risk was still significant.

Padma Shri Awardee Dr. K.K Aggarwal, President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and National President Elect Indian Medical Association (IMA), stated that, “Globally 46.8 million people are estimated to have dementia and the number will almost double over the next 20 years as demographic aging continues. Smoking increases the likelihood of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and stroke which are major risk factors for dementia. Smoking and associated high levels of homocysteine are also implicated to play a role in cognitive impairment. Moreover, oxidative damage caused by smoke can further lead to conditions causing dementia. Secondhand smoke is equally potent in causing these implications. There is also a dose response relationship, the more secondhand smoke you inhale, the more danger you face of having dementia and related cognitive decline.”

Smoking may reduce the effectiveness of some types of medications commonly prescribed to treat Alzheimer’s disease. This finding has also supported the recent study.

“Adopting healthy life choices can significantly reduce the risk of developing dementia later in life. Regular physical activity, maintaining a healthy body weight, a well-balanced diet, not smoking, stress management and limited alcohol consumption are all linked to significant reductions in the risk of dementia as well as cancer, circulatory disorders and mental health problems. Smoking is a huge burden on healthcare in India and its awareness as a modifiable risk factor can greatly reduce the disease burden of the society as a whole. It is estimated that up to one third of all dementia related cases can be prevented by smoking cessation”, added Dr. K.K Aggarwal.
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.

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