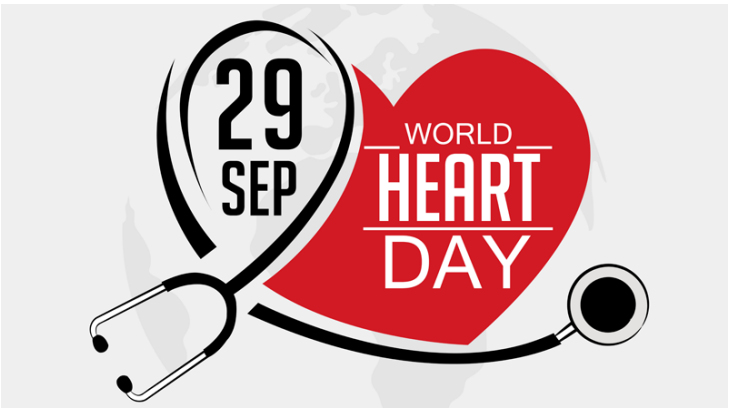
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My Heart Your Heart- Celebrating World Heart Day 2019

27 September 2019 | Features

CVD, including heart disease and stroke, is the worldâ??s leading cause of death claiming 17.9 million lives each year



Back in 2012, world leaders committed to reducing global mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) by 25% by 2025. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is accountable for nearly half of all NCD deaths making it the world's number one killer. World Heart Day, celebrated on 29 September, is the perfect platform for the CVD community to unite in the fight against CVD and reduce the global disease burden.

Created by the World Heart Federation, World Heart Day informs people around the globe that CVD, including heart disease and stroke, is the world's leading cause of death claiming 17.9 million lives each year, and highlights the actions that individuals can take to prevent and control CVD.

On this occasion, BioSpectrum brings to you a collection of views, observations and findings from a bunch of healthcare experts in India-

"To raise awareness and control the rising number of people being affected by cardiovascular diseases, the World Heart federation founded World Heart Day in 2000. An annual initiative to spread the word about how premature mortality due to cardiovascular diseases (CVD) can be combatted, 29th September is marked as the World Health Day. CVDs and heart problems are growing to become the most common epidemic of our era and hence require attention and action on a large scale by small steps at the earliest.

World Heart Day is observed to promote various steps and the changes in one's lifestyle that can prevent card cardiovascular conditions like heart attack, heart failure, stroke, and any other related condition. The day is aimed to facilitate action to educate people how controlling the risk factors through diet and other routine habits can help avoid so many deaths due to CVDs which have become the number one killer today.

This year, the World Heart Day is themed around asking the world to be 'Heart Heroes' by making a heart promise to someone they love or care about to eat a better healthy diet, to stay more active, to stay no to smoking, etc."

Dr S Venkatesh, Lead Consultant – Interventional Cardiologist, Aster RV Hospital

"More than 90% of sudden deaths are Cardiac in nature and one of the major reason is dangerous (abnormal) rhythms arising from lower chambers of heart (Ventricles), called ventricular arrhythmias. Sudden Cardiac death can be very effectively prevented by implanting a device called ICD (Implantable cardioverter defibrillator). This device is implanted under local anesthesia where a wire (lead) goes into the Right ventricle & device is implanted under Left clavicle (left side of the chest) under the skin. This device monitors heart Rythm 24x 7 & can diagnose dangerous Rhythm problems in 5-10 seconds & can give automatically electric shock to rectify the abnormal Rhythm to take it to normal. The efficacy of ICD to revive a Cardiac arrest victim is to the tune of 97%, thus it is highly successful device. Even now another latest ICD is available which is called Subcutaneous ICD wherein no wire (lead) goes inside the heart. Usually the battery of this device lasts 10-14 years. Implantable cardioverter defibrillator, ICD is considered to be life saving device for prevention of patients with sudden cardiac death."

Dr. T S Kler (Padma Bhushan), interventional cardiologist and Chairman of Pushpawati Singhania Hospital & Research Institute (PSRI) Heart Institute, New Delhi

"Menopause is one important condition associated with the heart diseases. It is found that Estrogen helps protect women against Heart Disease. During Menopause, as Estrogen levels drop, the level of fat in a woman's blood can surge. These changes puts a woman at risk of developing Heart and Circulatory System Disorders such as high Blood Pressure, high cholesterol, Stroke and Heart Disease. One can certainly control the external factors such as lifestyle, habits, and behavior that impact our health such as getting annual checkups done, stop smoking, following proper diet, doing regular exercise and stress management."

Dr Hasmukh Ravat, Senior Interventional Cardiologist & Ms Minal Shah Senior Nutrition Therapist, Fortis Hospital, Mumbai

“On the occasion of cardiomyopathy awareness month, and World Heart Day, Mumbai Wadia Children’s Cardiac Center has released data of 100 patients suffering from cardiomyopathy at Cardiomyopathy and heart failure clinic which was launched last year at BJ Wadia Hospital. As per the study conducted by the Drs and team At ‘Cardiomyopathy and Heart Failure Clinic’ in Wadia Hospital, 33 cases were with vitamin D and calcium deficiency, 29 were with infective, 27 were cancer therapy-induced. Few more were with metabolic disease and most were idiopathic (as the western statistics mention that 75% do not have a known cause of cardiomyopathy). In the study, 80 boys and 64 girls of paediatric age group were considered. Cardiomyopathy in children can be either acquired (i.e. post-viral infection, cancer therapy or dietary nutrient deficiency) or inherited with either or both parents being affected. The team is in the process of setting up the cardiomyopathy registry to collaborate with other centers in India managing such children to facilitate planned and uniform care across the nation. The need is also to set up cost-effective and affordable genetic and metabolic testing laboratories in the city to enable clinicians to reach a correct diagnosis and facilitate optimal counseling and care for children with cardiomyopathy.”

Dr Minnie Bodhanwala, CEO, Wadia Hospitals

“This World Heart Day, Saffolalife through its flagship study talks about commonly ignored lifestyle habits and their high correlation to heart risk. Even more eye-opening is the lack of awareness of the impact of these habits on heart health. The key finding that emerges from the study is that 64% people in the top Indian cities who exhibit one or more of behaviours like lack of sleep, stress, sedentary lifestyle, skipping meals and belly fat, are at heart risk. Lifestyle diseases are definitely a growing concern amongst the medical fraternity and Heart Disease has emerged as one of the most serious of these in the last few years. However most people do not understand how these small lifestyle behaviours can impact their heart. This study states that 90% of people who sleep less than 7.5 hours a day and are at heart risk, do not even consider sleep as a critical risk factor. Such basic lifestyle habits that we ignore today can lead to much bigger issues. This study is a wake-up call for us to start considering proactive understanding of heart health as a key factor while ensuring overall body health.”

Dr. Shashank Joshi, Endocrinologist, Diabetologist, Apollo Hospitals

"Depression and Cardiovascular Diseases (CVD) have major association, up to 15% of patients with CVD and 20% of patients who have undergone Coronary Artery Bypass Grafting (CABG) suffer from Depression hampering their recovery from the primary event. Prolonged Depression after a coronary event can increases the risk of mortality to 17%, as has compared to 3% risk in patients who don’t suffer from Depression. This is caused by certain Depression triggered physiological changes such as increased Heart rate, increased blood clotting, increased pro-inflammatory markers like CRP, etc. It also increases pain and hampers with cardiac rehabilitation post-surgery. American Heart Association has now recommended that all cardiac patients be screened for Depression, so that early treatment can be instituted."

ZAKIA KHAN, SR. CONSULTANT INTERVENTIONAL CARDIOLOGY, FORTIS HOSPITAL

"Any form of Obesity is bad, but some forms are worse. Look at yourself in the mirror, if you look like an Apple i.e. if your belly or waist is bigger than your hips then you have Truncal obesity. This excessive fat around your vital organs like intestines, is harmful and leads to Hypertension, Diabetes and increases the levels of bad cholesterol. Don’t be an apple. Moderate aerobic exercises daily for 30 minutes at least on 5 days a week, calorie restriction by reducing the portions of your meal, avoiding red meats, high fat dairy products, refined carbohydrates, aerated drinks, oily foods and replacing these with whole grains, fruits, vegetable and low fat dairy products is the way to go."

DR VIVEK MAHAJAN, CONSULTANT, INTERVENTIONAL CARDIOLOGY, FORTIS HOSPITAL

"Cardiovascular Diseases are the leading cause of death and loss of productive years globally. The major risk factors leading to a spike in the incidence of heart disease are bad food habits, Hypertension, air pollution, high cholesterol and tobacco usage. In majority of the cases, there were multiple factors. As the socio-economic status of Indians has increased in the last 2 decades, the incidence of Cardiovascular Disease has increased, indicating that Coronary Artery Disease is more of a lifestyle disease now. Diabetes and Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) account for smaller amounts of Atherosclerotic CVD in India. Dietary abnormalities such as low intake of fruit, vegetables, nuts, and seafood-derived Omega-3 Dats, coupled with elevated Sodium exposure, intake of processed meats, low intake of fiber and whole grains, accounted for more disease in India. Ambient air pollution, persistent organic pollutants, and exposure to solid fuels are larger risks to the population in India.

Studies suggest that higher incidence of heart ailments increased Abdominal Obesity, type 2 Diabetes Mellitus, and Dyslipidemia."

DR NILESH GAUTAM, SR. CONSULTANT, INTERVENTIONAL CARDILOGY, SL RAHEJA HOSPITAL

"Indians are being affected by Coronary Artery Disease 10yrs ahead of their western counterparts. Today, 7% of youngsters (between the age of 25 -35 years), 12-15% of non-Diabetic and 21% Diabetic young Indians (between 35-60 years) are diagnosed with Coronary Artery Disease. This is attributed to physical inactivity, wrong dietary choices i.e. high intake of junk foods, carbohydrates and oily foods, excessive smoking (75%), alcohol consumption, substance abuse, and high stress due to poor work-life balance. Prevention should start from childhood and be supplemented by regular cardiac screening in schools and colleges every 3-4 years; regular physical exercise programs in schools, colleges and workplaces is a must; an active yoga session can be conducted daily. Reduction of sugar intake, carbonated drinks and salt (sodium) in foods is absolutely essential."

DR MANOJ PRADHAN, SR. CONSULTANT, CVTS SURGERY, SL RAHEJA HOSPITAL

“It is always better to eat wisely, exercise regularly, keep away from any kind of tobacco and have regular check-ups with our own doctors. Remember, the first pain is too late. It does not mean the beginning of problems but rather signals the end of tolerance. So, the best cure is not to have problem at all.”

Dr. Kunal Sarkar, Senior Vice-Chairman & Senior Consultant Cardiac Surgeon, Medica Superspecialty Hospital

"With proper lifestyle changes, one can reduce the risk of heart attack by reducing bad cholesterol and controlling blood pressure and blood sugar. A happy and a healthy mind can only co-exist with a Healthy Heart.”

Dr. Dilip Kumar, Consultant Interventional Cardiologist, Medica Superspecialty Hospital

"Congenital heart disease (CHD), is prevalent worldwide and is still one of the leading causes of infant mortality in our country which is around 10%. Over 2.4 lakh children are born with congenital heart disease every year in our country which amounts to a tremendous disease burden. This weighs heavily not only on the child but also on their parents, society and the entire health care of the nation. Many of the CHDs can be diagnosed with simple echocardiographic imaging early on in life. The timely diagnosis is important but is not always done due to various reasons some of which include inability to avail health care due to poverty, large number of home deliveries still, cultural and social taboos, lack of awareness of the availability of screening programmes/financial funding in various hospitals for such afflicted kids, limited government schemes in majority of treating hospitals. Awareness programmes and financial aid in the form of government schemes/ help from various non-profit organizations/ voluntary contributions to this cause would go a long way in helping such ill kids to give them a better future and to better the health of the nation."

Dr. Nischal Rajendra Pandya, Consultant, Adult & Paediatric Cardiac Surgeon, Fortis Hospital

"The burden of cardiovascular diseases is increasing in India, and systematic understanding of its causes is a huge topic for the ongoing research. It is well-known that high blood pressure, tobacco consumption and diabetes are the usual triggers for heart trouble. But there is a silent killer that is hardly known to anyone which later on may affect the health of your heart and remains largely ignored and that is the ‘Oral Health’. Ignoring Oral Health can put your heart at severe risk. Various reports and researches have proved that prevalence of heart disease and stroke has gone up in past 25 years. The news studies published in The Lancet and its associated journals in 2018 reveal that heart disease is the leading individual cause of disease burden in India, whereas the stroke is the fifth leading cause. With an alarming rise of over 34%, death rate due to cardiovascular diseases has become the latest health concern in India.

Our oral cavity harbors millions of bacteria and there is a greater chance that one of these microorganisms enters into heart via the bloodstream and cause infection in the heart valves or heart tissues. This inflammation, known as endocarditis or infective endocarditis (IE), generally occurs when bacteria, fungi or other germs from another part of the body infects heart via

bloodstream."

Dr Shalley Batta Rishi, Clove Dental

"The infection in heart tissues is capable of destroying all the four heart valves through which the blood is guided in to the right direction to reach every part of the body. The source of this scary infection lies in the improper care of your mouth. Here lies the indispensable need for proper dental care, from brushing and flossing twice to visiting the dentist once in six months.

Sometimes, even after taking good care of your oral hygiene, the cardiovascular system can be infected with this bacterium. Infectious bacteria can enter the bloodstream while undergoing dental procedures like extraction, root canal treatment (RCT) or flap surgeries that are often accompanied by some bleeding. While a bacterial infection of this nature can happen to anyone, people with an underlying heart condition are at a greater risk."

Lt. Gen Dr Vimal Arora, Chief Clinical Officer of Clove Dental

"The increasing burden of cardiac disease in India is worrisome and must be brought under control. Higher rates of indoor and outdoor pollution, combined with a shift towards a sedentary lifestyle and an increase in life threatening habits such as smoking, vaping and other drug abuse, particularly in the urban youth, poses a threat to the heart health of the nation. Unfortunately, incidences of heart attacks have been occurring in very young age groups, even between the ages of 20-30. India is home to the largest youth population, and we must ensure that we pass down healthy lifestyle habits to the next generations. It is also important to keep heart health in check with regular screenings, to catch early signs of a deteriorating heart so that the damage can be managed or reversed. No matter the age, a healthier diet and active lifestyle can bring incredible health benefits to the body, including the heart."

Dr Ganeshakrishnan Iyer, lead consultant, CTVS surgery, Aster CMI Hospital

"In India, the incidence of heart disease and mortality has increased significantly over the past 30 years that have coincided with an increasing burden of non-communicable diseases. The human body is naturally programmed to respond to life-threatening situations. The brain sparks off a cascade of hormones and chemicals that speeds up your heart rate and breathing, elevates your blood pressure and boosts the glycogen supply to your muscles. Stress triggers inflammation which results in the narrowing of the coronary arteries thus increasing the possibilities of a heart attack. Constant stress also makes it difficult to maintain healthy habits, such as following a good diet, getting enough exercise, abstaining from smoking, and getting adequate sleep. It is also important to educate people about taking the requisite preventive measures and adopting naturopathy practices, mindfulness and yoga can mitigate their risk of heart disease."

Dr Srividya Nandakumar Sr. Naturopath, Jindal Naturecure Institute

"As India’s disease epidemiology shifts towards greater incidence of non - communicable diseases, there is an imminent need to unleash preventive healthcare strategies at the primary healthcare level. Equipping our primary health practitioners to correctly assess risk factors, effectively manage chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension and timely diagnose and refer heart disease can go a long way in cutting rate of mortality. According to WHO, almost 80% of premature heart disease and stroke is preventable by timely action. Integrating primary healthcare physicians into a national prevention model for cardiovascular disease can reap rich dividends in terms of prevention of disease and reducing its curative cost burden. Primary healthcare practitioners and non - physicians like nurses must be effectively trained to assess risk factors of all patients visiting their clinics irrespective of the health complaint they come up with. People with high-risk factors must be made to undergo diagnostic tests to rule out diabetes, elevated blood pressure as well as poor cholesterol levels. At the primary care level, hypertension is also preventable through a proper diet, physical exercise and a well-tailored hypertension control program to reduce the incidence of stroke, heart disease, and kidney disease. At the same time, the primary physicians must also be trained to advocate healthy eating and living habits to all patients visiting their clinics. Consumption of local fruits and vegetables should be promoted along with the reduction in intake of salt, refined sugars and trans fat. Control of diet and physical activity will result in a reduction in the incidence of obesity, hypertension, high cholesterol levels, and diabetes. People must also be educated to identify signs of a cardiac event and the need to immediately respond to them. Thus, Making the ‘Fit India’ campaign more than a slogan and making it a mass movement at the grassroots is critical to our

collective fight against cardiovascular diseases and other lifestyle ailments."

Savitha Kuttan, CEO, Omnicuris

"The rising incidence of non-communicable diseases in general and cardiovascular diseases, in particular, has been the most notable trend in the healthcare scene of India over the past 25 years. It is estimated that following a healthy lifestyle can help prevent over 80 percent of coronary heart disease cases, 50 percent of ischemic strokes, 80 percent of sudden cardiac arrest, and over 70 percent of premature deaths caused by heart disease. Clinical efforts at preventing heart disease have mostly been secondary or primary. Primary prevention involves controlling these risk factors by making the necessary lifestyle changes and taking medication. However, we need to focus more on primordial prevention. It involves educating people to help prevent inflammation, atherosclerosis, and endothelial dysfunction, and thereby prevent risk factors such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, obesity, and cardiovascular events. The more we push primordial prevention, more people will successfully protect themselves against heart disease. This must be done at the community level by engaging primary healthcare providers, nurses, midwives etc who must be trained to educate communities about the risk of heart disease and the need for adopting the life lifestyle measures to prevent it."

Rajesh Ranjan Singh, CEO, Wadhwani Institute for Sustainable Healthcare (WISH)

"Cardiovascular deaths (CVDs) have emerged as a major public health problem in India, affecting people across all walks of life. Our data indicates that stress among the younger population is emerging as a major cause for heart problems and thus there is a need for immediate lifestyle changes. On World Heart Day, there is a need to raise awareness on the fact that CVDs can affect people of any age group and technology such as those that help monitor vital statistics can enable timely diagnosis and prevention."

Neha Rastogi, Co-Founder and COO-Agatsa

"Stress can lead to lowered heart rate variability which signifies a poorly-functioning heart with sympathetic predominance. People in the age group of 30 to 50 are increasingly susceptible to heart problems today given the fast-paced lifestyles and work stress. They also eat unhealthy food, smoke, drink and skip exercise, which are all behaviors linked to heart disease in the long term. There is a need to raise awareness on the impact of these habits and take timely action."

Dr K K Aggarwal (Padma Shri), President, Heart Care Foundation of India and Confederation of Medical Associations of Asia and Oceania

"Heart disease management is a complex issue and requires critical attention. India lost close to an estimated $236 billion between 2005 and 2015 due to CVDs. While the progress in urban areas has been considerable with respect to CVD management, the healthcare delivery system has still got a lot of ground to cover. About 2.5 million people require surgical intervention for various serious heart ailments, in a year but only 90,000 heart surgeries are performed in Indian hospitals.While much emphasis is laid on curative care, CVD management entails much more. Apart from building public awareness, the focus must now shift to preventive care. Innovations brought in by medtech startups in this segment are commendable. Self-monitoring systems, home-based testing devices and portable diagnostic equipment are not only bringing down healthcare costs, but also affordable healthcare within reach for one and all."

Rahul Rastogi, Co-Founder & CEO, Agatsa

"According to the World Health Organization (WHO), heart attacks are the leading cause of disability and death in India. One major issue is the delay on the patient side in seeking adequate medical attention. More often than not, the patients ignore early signs of cardiac distress like pain in throat, neck, back or shoulders or tightness of chest accompanied by nausea, cold sweat, weakness or shortness of breath. Some of such signs may also seem generic and be passed as trivial concerns. Yet, if ignored over a period of time, basic symptoms can result in fatal cardiac conditions. Therefore, there is a need for mass

awareness amongst patients and clinicians and sooner a patient seeks professional help, efficient and effective in the diagnosis and treatment path. Digital healthcare services play a crucial role in this regard in more ways than one. Be it seeking immediate appointments, limiting waiting period or any other such assistance.

Heart health, the importance of time and role of digitisation

The golden hour of 60 minutes is prescribed to get immediate medical attention in critical and emergency cases. However, immediate attention is advised in the majority of cases of cardiac concerns. But Indians tend to ignore their health and prolong this period not only by days but even months in certain cases. Procrastination is majorly due to perceived inconvenience in accessing healthcare at large – one's chances of contacting the doctor at a preferred time slot in an efficient way is a possibility which has limited odds. However, digital healthcare has provided patients with a solution to instantly consult a doctor 24x7 from anywhere. On Practo, we saw a 54% increase in the number of appointments booked for cardiologists compared to last year. Mumbai saw a staggering annual increase of 181% followed by Delhi and Bangalore. Not just restricting themselves to visiting the doctors, a lot of consumers used Practo's eConsult service to clear their doubts related to heart problems. 22% for cardiology related queries on our online consultation service is a testament to this. A patient doesn't have to face delays anymore and can quickly consult a specialist for early symptoms and plan his appointment right away.

Lifestyle impacting heart health and the role of digital healthcare

A Lancet study estimated that the prevalence of heart disease in the country has increased from 2.57 crore in 1990 to 5.45 crore in 2016, and deaths resulting from cardiovascular diseases also increased from 13 lakh in 1990 to 28 lakh in 2016. What's really worrying is that heart diseases are no more an old-age issue but have put the youngsters at equal risk. Today's sedentary lifestyle is one of the major reasons for this. But in recent years, the healthcare landscape has rapidly been changing as new digital technologies have emerged and are increasingly being integrated into everyday healthcare. Digital healthcare has increased the overall accessibility to quality healthcare services. Patients can now reach doctors virtually anywhere and anytime to get timely advice and help instead of relying on self-diagnosis."

Dr Alexander Kuruvilla, Chief Health Strategy Officer, Practo

"Instead of imposing a blanket price control on cardiac stents a differential pricing is more appropriate. Differential pricing that rewards advancement in technology can be a game changer for healthcare in India. India needs more new products from around the globe and can gain much from the vast global experience of innovators in its fight against its double burden of disease. The intent is to increase the choices for the patients."

Praveen Chandra, chairman interventional and structural heart cardiology, Medanta – The Medicity

"Over the past decades, coronary interventions, such as, coronary angioplasties have emerged in a big way and evolution of drug eluting stents has become finer. Technology has the potential to improve the quality of patient's life. So, considering the ongoing cardiovascular disease burden, the government needs to focus on innovation friendly policies, to ensure both the domestic and global stent manufacturers can bring in advanced quality stents to the Indian market."

Dr Sundeep Mishra, professor of cardiology department at AIIMS, New Delhi

"Price capping policies in the recent years may soon deprive both patients and doctors the freedom to choose from advanced quality cardiac stents, as most may not be available in future. Capping the price has only disincentivized innovation. We must not forget that positive clinical outcomes depend on the analogy of the patient as they can reflect different medical conditions. So, requirement of the appropriate stent should be considered. Hence, the concept of "one-size-fits-all principle does not hold ground and differential pricing should be considered."

Dr Bharat Rawat, associate director, cardiology, Medanta Super Speciality Hospital, Indore

"The burden of cardiovascular diseases has increased rapidly in India over the past three decades. According to India State Level Disease Burden Report 2018 released by ICMR and PHFI, the prevalence of heart disease increased by over 50% between 1990 and 2016. The disease burden has also risen rapidly among the rural population in recent years. Between 2000 and 2015, the age-standardized rate of mortality due to coronary heart diseases increased by over 56% in rural India. It is also estimated that Indians tend to develop cardiovascular disease 5-10 years earlier as compared to other ethnic groups. The situation calls for the need to prepare our healthcare system to meet this increasing burden. Unfortunately, we seem to be grossly underprepared to address both preventive and curative requirements. We have just around 4,000 cardiologists practicing in the country when the need exceeds 80,000. More worrisomely, these limited number of cardiologists are concentrated in select urban areas, leaving a large population without easy and quick access to a heart specialist. In such a situation, many people lose their lives or suffer irreversible damage to heart by the time they are able to reach a cardiologist. When it comes to heart, time is muscle!

We need to work on multiple fronts to prepare for this challenge. Firstly, we urgently need to increase both MBBS seats as well as PG seats in Cardiology to churn out more specialists including General Cardiologists, Cardiothoracic and Vascular Surgeons, Interventional Cardiologists and Electrophysiologists. Secondly, we need to devise a comprehensive prevention strategy which can ensure that all people with risk factors are assessed at primary levels and their risk factors such as diabetes and hypertension are managed effectively. Thirdly, we need to establish more hospitals in rural areas and smaller towns. This must be done both by the government and the private sector to improve accessibility."

Dr Dharminder Nagar, MD, Paras Healthcare

"Current preventive practices tell you about the current state of your heart function and are more diagnostic in nature. But that may not be enough. Every human being is born with a genetic code that remains the same all throughout his or her life. Depending on this genetic code, he or she remains naturally susceptible to certain diseases. Therefore, along with the preventive diagnostic tests, it is important to understand the underlying genetic risk of the individuals. Many cardiac disorders can be inherited, including arrhythmias, congenital heart disease, cardiomyopathy, and high blood cholesterol. Coronary artery disease leading to heart attack, stroke, and heart failure can run in families, indicating inherited genetic risk factors. In India, every 1 in 5 individual is at a high genetic risk for heart diseases.

Genetics can influence the risk of heart disease in many ways. Genes control every aspect of the cardiovascular system, from the strength of the blood vessels to the way cells in the heart communicate. A genetic variation in a single gene can affect the likelihood of developing heart disease. There are strong reasons to now consider incorporating genetic risk scores into clinical practice. This will help the individuals to avoid or delay the onset or make necessary lifestyle changes to mitigate the genetic risk of heart diseases. However, heart conditions are also highly influenced by the environment, occupation and lifestyle of the individuals which might contribute equally in the manifestation. But then, why repair or repent, when you can prevent and protect?"

Pranav Anam, Founder, The Gene Box

"In recent years, the incidences of heart-related ailments have ascended to alarming levels in the country. To much surprise, more than 50 percent of all heart attacks occur in individuals below the age of 50 and about 25 percent in people below the age of 40, as per data from the Indian Heart Association. Thus, it becomes imperative that people plan their finances well in advance so as to remain protected against any unfortunate incident. Moreover, a health insurance plan is a must in order to prevent expenses that one may have to spend from their own pockets jeopardising the overall budget of the family.

Our claims data for heart related illnesses revealed some alarming facts. According to the data, the ischaemic heart diseases, circulatory related, hypertension and cerebrovascular are the most prevalent forms of heart diseases in the country. The data further showed that majority of claims have been received from metros like Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and closely followed by Tier II markets like Hyderabad, Surat, Pune. This clearly shows that even smaller markets are increasingly being affected by cardiovascular related conditions due to sedentary lifestyle, rising stress levels, etc. Further, the data reported that the 46-60 age group is the most affected by heart diseases at 44 percent, followed by the 36-45 age bracket at 21 percent. It was also reported that 28 percent of patients suffering from heart related diseases are women, highlighting the fact that women are also at a great risk of suffering from cardiovascular diseases.

We urge everyone to adopt healthy habits and follow a fitter lifestyle in order to keep heart related ailments at bay. A health insurance cover is a necessity today and should be bought well in advance, after thoroughly comparing features like coverage

limit, inclusions/ exclusions, etc. which meets the requirements of an individual or family. Besides, to get coverage against heart related conditions, it is advisable to buy a comprehensive indemnity plan which will cover hospitalization, pre & post coverage, doctor consultation, etc along with a critical illness plan which offers lump-sum pay out and covers many other critical illnesses."

Ashish Mehrotra, MD & CEO, Max Bupa Health Insurance