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World Diabetes Day: Clinical trials for new diabetes drugs urgently needed in India

13 November 2015 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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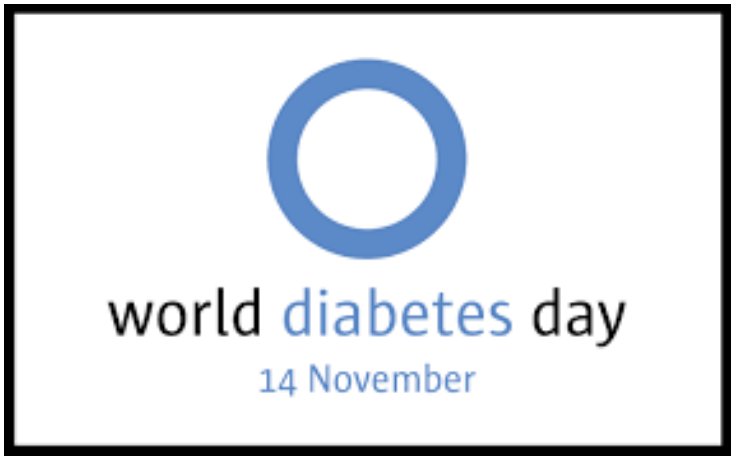

This year the theme is 'Healthy Living and Diabetes'.

India has the second highest number of people with diabetes in the world1 with 66.84 million diabetes cases in the country today.

An estimated 1 in 12 adults suffer from this lifestyle disease and many cases remain undiagnosed.

The ever-increasing diabetes burden has a cascading impact on our nation's health expenditure and healthcare resources.

Adopting better diabetes management practices and developing more efficacious treatment for diabetes and its resultant complications are an important need.

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There is also an urgent need for investments in more clinical research to ensure that patients can benefit from newer and better medicines says the Indian Society for Clinical Research (ISCR), an association of clinical research professionals.

Diabetes is a chronic disease which often leads to a number of complications.

Currently not all of these can be treated efficiently with the drugs available.

So as new promising molecules emerge and global clinical research is done for these, India's participation will mean faster access to new drugs for diabetics in the country.

"The last two years has seen a drop in clinical research being done in the country which has meant delayed access to newer therapies and treatment for our population," said Ms Suneela Thatte, President, ISCR. "Given that India has the largest disease burden in the world, we hope that the recently amended clinical research regulatory guidelines will see more organisations investing in doing clinical research in the country. We have a moral responsibility to ensure that patients in our country have access to newer and better medicines. Given the high incidence of diabetes in India, clinical research will also help identify which medicines work best for our genetic disposition which is critical to managing our growing diabetes burden."

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Dr Manoj Chawla, Consultant Diabetologist and Coordinator, Department of Diabetology, Asian Heart institute & Research Centre, an investigator in a recently concluded diabetes clinical trial said, "Given the growing burden of diabetes in our country, it is extremely important for us to test the efficacy of new medicines on our population which is only possible through clinical research.

"It is not just patients but we, as investigators, as well who benefit from clinical research because through participating in research, we learn more about newly developed drugs, their benefits and risks. This enables us to play a strong role as global opinion leaders in the safety and efficacy of new drugs for native populations," he added.

A patient in Delhi who participated in a diabetes trial (name withheld to protect patient confidentiality) said, "I was advised to enrol in clinical research by my diabetologist. Being diagnosed with diabetes, I went through a very difficult time and it was tough on my family too.

"When I was told about the potential benefits of a new diabetes drug which was not available in the market, I decided to participate in a clinical trial and do not regret it." He further said, "It felt good to be surrounded by people who, just like me are fighting this lifelong disease. The trial helped me understand my condition better and the medication I received helped me manage my diabetes more efficiently."