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Ã¢â?¬Å?Food habits interacting with genetic susceptibility to unmask diabetesÃ¢â?¬?

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Please tell us about your thoughts on the current diabetes situation in India? Where are we lacking?

Current diabetes situation in India is major burden for the society and the health care sector. The prevalence is higher than 65 million and it is showing a steady increase both in the urban and rural areas. Recent trends in the socioeconomic transition; sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy food habits interact with the existing genetic and ethnic susceptibility to unmask the disease at a young and productive age in Indians. Earlier the onset of the disease, higher is the chance of developing long-term complications which cause severe morbidity and early mortality. Sadly, the awareness about the disease is poor among the public.

Great deal of inertia exists among them to screen and start early treatment for diabetes. Adherence to medical prescriptions is also poor. As a result, control of diabetes is far from optimal in majority of the patients. Diabetes is a costly disease, especially when insulin treatment is needed or complications are present. The government has to take drastic steps to improve awareness about diabetes and other non-communicable diseases, improve the facilities for early detection and management at affordable costs. National capacity above all has to improve considerably.

What is the current focus of the research group headed by you at Dr Ramachandran's Diabetes Hospital?

Type 2 diabetes, which constitutes more than 95 percent of total diabetes, is a lifestyle disorder. It is a preventable disorder if the early subclinical stages are diagnosed in high-risk persons and lifestyle changes are instituted. We are currently focusing on the preventive aspect of diabetes and on developing modalities to reach the public at large by using pragmatic, scalable and affordable tools for communication, such as m-health.

According to you what is more important: publications or product development oriented research?

For a researcher, publications in accredited journals give credence to his research findings. It will lead to healthy collaborations and the research findings will have practical utility. Product development oriented research, such as development of newer technology or newer molecules for treatment are also equally important. On the other hand, most of the medical epidemiology research is called population research; the products are mostly processes for tackling the public health problems, which are appreciated by only few as they have long-term implications. One example is that showing Type 2 Diabetes can be prevented and how?

What is your advice to the young researchers of India who sometimes feel left out due to glamour and comfort of other jobs?

Research needs time and patience, other than good environment. Young researchers should not expect short term rewards.