

Experts stress on need for timely intervention for hearing impairment in children

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As a prelude to International Ear Care Day (March 3), PD Hinduja Hospital and MRC in association with Indian Academy of Pediatrics and ihear foundation (IHF) conducted a seminar on 'Current concepts in hearing impairment and Cochlear Implants' for Pediatricians. The seminar was spearheaded by Dr Milind Kirtane, Consultant ENT Surgeon, PD Hinduja Hospital and his team. Since the WHO theme this year is 'Childhood hearing loss: act now, here is how!' the focus of the session was on the role of pediatricians in early diagnosis of hearing impairment in children and need for early intervention with Cochlear Implants.

Padma Shri recipient Dr Milind Kirtane highlighting the importance of awareness on hearing impairment and early detection said, "About 1-6 per 1000 infants are born with significant hearing loss. We believe that timely detection of hearing impairment, followed by early intervention with hearing aids or cochlear implantation as indicated can help such children hear and live a normal life. Through the IHF, we aim to train professionals for early detection and early intervention. I feel that hearing test should be made mandatory among newborns in India as it is in the West."

Dr Kirtane has performed more than 2000 successful cochlear implant surgeries across India and over the past several years has trained over 100 surgeons through workshops on cochlear implants and helped many of them establish their own cochlear implant programs at several hospitals including municipal and government.

Speaking during the seminar, Dr Samir Dalwai, National Chairperson, Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP) said, "Children with profound hearing loss are normal, intelligent and much capable of blossoming into able and confident individuals. It is vital for the parents and family members to understand the smallest hints of hearing loss and take speedy action. With technological advancements we can now conduct procedures and transform lives but timely intervention is important. Pediatricians across the country could play a significant role in early diagnosis of hearing impairment in children."

Interesting topics discussed during the day: concerns over hereditary hearing loss among children, complications arising from

hearing impairment, correlation between hearing loss and epilepsy, impact of hearing loss on nervous system, multi-disciplinary intervention in hearing impairment, challenges in treatment of hearing issues among children, surgical advancements in hearing restoration, benefits of mandatory hearing tests among newborns.

The seminar concluded with a panel discussion chaired by Dr Milind Kirtane on "how pediatricians can play a role in early detection of hearing impairment in infants". The experts who participated were Dr Waheeda Pagarkar, â€?Audiovestibular Physician from UK; Dr Vrajesh Udani, Pediatric Neurologist; Dr Neelu Desai, Pediatric Neurologist and Epileptologist; Dr Soonu Udani, Pediatrician; Dr Mamta Muranjan, Consultant Clinical Genetics; Ms Nishita Mohandas, Audiologist.