

On Children's Day-eve, top specialist says congenital heart disease kills 78K infants in India year



A staggering 78,000 infants born with congenital heart disease die in India annually due to inadequate healthcare facilities and lack of awareness, according to top cardiac surgeon Dr. Ramakanta Panda, the Group CEO of Asian Heart Institute (AHI), Mumbai, India.

In contrast, the number of children dying from heart failure or related problems has dropped by 50 per cent in the advanced countries, he said Sunday, November 13, 2022, as the country prepares to celebrate Children's Day on Monday (November 14), the 133rd birth anniversary of Independent India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

"Nevertheless, paediatric heart failure remains a pressing issue as it is the prime cause for death in children under the age of 5 world over -- Heart disease ranks among the most prominent diseases among children. Moreover, children with heart failure face a higher mortality rate in emergency situations compared with adults," a grim Dr. Panda told IANS.

Elaborating, the renowned surgeon -- who performed a successful heart operation on the former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in January 2009 -- said that there are two types of congenital heart defects in children, simple and complex.

"Some of the simple types of congenital heart defects close (cure) naturally, while others may close with or without surgery. The complex ones may require multiple surgeries to be performed over a period of several years," Dr. Panda explained.

Yet, deaths in emergency departments and in-hospital admissions, which are significantly higher in kids compared with adults, remains the key factor for children.

This is due to the major differences in the available cures for heart diseases among children and adults, he said.

"While there are multiple FDA-approved medications to treat heart failure in adults, there is only one such option available to treat children," Dr. Panda pointed out.

First six weeks of pregnancy critical for the development of the baby's heart

Detailing on the issue, he said that the first 6 weeks of pregnancy are critical for the development of the baby's heart, it begins to take shape and starts beating in this period and the major blood vessels that run to and from it also begin to develop.

"Studies have found that heart defects may begin to develop at this point in a baby's development, but there has been no proof as to how or what causes most of these faults. But, genetics, certain medical conditions, some medications, environmental or lifestyle factors like smoking, are suspect of playing a role," said Dr. Panda.

Even children exhibit certain symptoms of cognitive heart diseases, like rapid breathing, blue tongue or fingernails, swelling in hands, legs, belly or around the eyes, breathlessness during feeding, quick exhaustion during activities or exercise, fatigue or fainting during physical activity, etc.

"Since the exact causes of heart diseases among children are unknown, it's best to follow certain precautions that can help reduce the overall risk in the child during pregnancy. No drinking or smoking, even second-hand smoke, regular vaccinations, manage any chronic health issues, check the blood-sugar levels, take multi-vitamins and consult a doctor before taking any medication," advised Dr. Panda.

He said it is extremely important to learn about your child's congenital heart defects to understand the condition and what to expect in future.

"This way, you can be better prepared for anything that may come up in the long or short run to help your child at every step conquer his or her heart problems," urged Dr. Panda. –

www.daijiworld.com/news, November 13, 2022,