



Winters Increase Strokes In Patients Making The Golden Hour A Very Important Factor In Preventing Disabilities And Saving Lives

Dr Kishan Raj, Sr. Consultant, Neurology, IBS Institute of Brain & Spine explains, “An ischemic stroke is sudden interruption of blood supply of brain due to blockage of blood vessels by a clot, which restrict the seamless blood flow and supply of oxygenated blood to the brain. When a patient suffers a stroke with symptoms of what we term as F.A.S.T, it is an emergency and medical intervention should be administered on the patient within the ‘Golden Hours’. A Golden Hours for stroke patients is as critical as it is for patients with cardiovascular diseases. Timely intervention can prevent permanent damage to the brain cells and save lives. Lack of immediate and urgent action can result in permanent disability, or even death. That is why early and timely recognition of signs and symptoms of a stroke is of paramount importance and situations may demand a race against time.”

Neurologists term F.A.S.T as the most recognisable symptoms of a stroke. These are F – Face drooping; A – Arm weakness; S – Speech slurring; T – Time to call for medical help. Other recognisable symptoms which require increased awareness about include sudden numbness or loss of sensation in the limbs, or one side of the body; sudden onset of confusion or disorientation or irrelevant talk; sudden loss of vision, in one or both sides; sudden onset of vertigo or lack of balance while walking.

Stroke has emerged not only as a second leading cause for disability and even death, it has also become a significant cause of health burden globally. While there has been a fall of almost 42 per cent decline in developed countries, a dismal rise of almost 100 per cent in strokes has been recorded in Asian countries. It is also a fact that in India while significant campaigns, initiatives have been taken to create increased awareness on other non-communicable diseases like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and hypertension etc. strokes have not been prioritised as is urgently required. Acute ischemic stroke also called ‘brain attack’, is a medical emergency and should be treated with the highest priority to prevent disability and death.

To bring forth the importance of timely medical intervention in stroke patients, **Dr Sachin Kandhari, noted brain & spine surgeon and Managing Director – Institute of Brain & Spine** says, “From being a twelfth cause for deaths, the rise in strokes has brought it to the fifth leading cause for deaths in India. When a patient suffers a stroke every minute matters, a delay of 1 minute causes the death of 1.9 million neurons. Longer the time to initiate treatment, more severe the damage to brain cells. The gaps that need to be plugged on the patients’ end are lack of awareness about the symptoms of stroke, delay in arrival, and lack of centres offering thrombolysis, a reviving treatment procedure that can prevent any damage to the brain cells. Thrombolysis is the game changer in the stroke management sector and it is very important that we have more and more hospitals offering a complete care and end-to-end solutions for stroke patients. At our end, in IBS, we have a robust team that is quick to act in such cases and have been able to save critical cases from losing lives.”

A stroke patient’s symptoms have to be recognised and immediate medical intervention required, the patient should be rushed to the emergency department of a hospital which is equipped with stroke-ready team. The clots formed in the blood leading to obstruction of blood flow should be removed as quickly as possible. Neurologists usually inject a clot bursting drug which arrests any damage that can occur to the brain cells and prevent any deterioration. This procedure has best and optimal outcome only if given within three to five hours of the occurrence of a stroke. Time becomes an imperative factor in saving any deterioration in a stroke patient.

A few healthy steps that can prevent occurrence of strokes in winters are avoiding junk food, red meat or overly salty diet. Increase in consumption of fruits and vegetables can contribute to prevention of strokes. Regular exercising, maintaining acceptable blood pressure and blood sugar levels in patients suffering from co-morbidities, keeping blood cholesterol under control, giving up smoking, limiting drinking to small quantities will support healthy life and prevent strokes.