

New cure for elephantiasis

NGO's treatment combines several systems of medicine, including yoga

Dipannita Das | TNN

Bangalore: Here is some good news for those suffering from filariasis, a disabling and neglected disease which affects the poor. A new integrated medical treatment has been developed to cure the disease that grossly deforms the legs.

An effective procedure that combines various systems of medicine such as ayurveda, allopathy, homeopathy, physiotherapy and yoga is being used to treat filariasis by Dr S R Narahari, founder of the Institute of Applied Dermatology (IA), an NGO in Kasaragod, Kerala. So far, 600 patients have undergone treatment.

Also called elephantiasis as the deformed leg looks like that of an elephant, an affected person is unable to walk or work for he suffers from pain. Many are even cast out of their families.

But this integrated treatment comes as a ray of hope for these patients and is considered as a new medical development in India by the Department of Health Research, International Society of Lymphology and various national and international scientific institutions. Dr Narahari says, "The global Alliance to Elim-

inate Lymphatic Filariasis (GAELF), a public-private partnership, was created to globally eliminate the disease through mass administration of DEC tablets and to provide treatment for affected persons. But the latter part of the project was not effectively carried out. Although the pharmaceuticals industry and WHO ignored it, the treatment for filariasis was developed independently by IAD with support from the Kerala government and Prof. Terence Ryan, department of dermatology, Oxford Medical School, UK.

Dr Narahari says that Kerala is known for its ayurvedic treatment. Patients relied on alternative medicine and in some cases responded positively to ayurveda and homeopathy. "These patients made us explore integrating these streams of medicine for treatment," he says. Thus, doctors from different systems (allopathy, yoga, homeopathy and ayurveda) came together and explored this possibility. And it worked.

But mutual orientation between the systems took his team five years, and another year for legal and ethical issues to be worked out.

WHAT IS FILARIASIS?

Filariasis (also called elephantiasis) is a parasitic and infectious tropical disease, that is caused by thread-like filarial nematode worms.

- One-third of the patients suffering from filariasis, about 2.5 crore, are in India.
- Filariasis is the second leading cause of disability, according to WHO.

THE CURE

- Integrated treatment helps reducing the lymph size by 41.6% in three months. It aids improvement by 80% and eventually helps patients lead normal lives.
- American, British scientific journals have supported this treatment by writing editorials in support of it
- For details contact : 04994-230116 or log onto www.indiadermatology.org
- This integrated treatment helps in reduction of lymph size of 41.6% in three months. Eventually, one can become normal and helps in 80% improvement.



IAD's treatment is home-based and involves self care. Patients go through a 14-day training regimen which includes yoga, massage, use of drugs and compression bandaging. The patients are made to follow it up at home. "The conventional treatment is a surgery that has its own complications," says Dr Narahari.

And the treatment has been showing results. Binu, 23, was suffering from filariasis for 13 years. His right leg weighed 24 kg and his left leg, 17 kg. He could not walk and suffered from pain and depression as he did not receive proper treatment. But after six months of treatment at IAD, his right leg now weighs 12 kg and his left leg, 9 kg.

At present, five doctors and a team of 21 people are working at IAD for filariasis and integrated treatment protocol for other skin diseases. Doctors from different systems of medicine work together and prescribe drugs and remedies. According to the cases and requirement, patients receive different systems of treatment simultaneously. The treatment begins only after the patient consents to it.