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Fatty liver Disease

Fatty liver disease is a condition increasing in incidence and prevalence in epidemic proportions the world over. In India too, we are not far behind in comparison to western world.

The relevance of the disease is, risk of advanced liver disease like cirrhosis liver where the liver becomes hardened and reduced in its functional ability. Cirrhosis liver is associated with multiple complications like variceal bleed (vomiting blood), fluid collection in abdominal cavity, jaundice and development of liver cancer. About 25-30% of patients with cirrhosis are at risk of developing liver cancer. Unfortunately liver cancer is detected at an advanced stage in the majority. Curative therapies have only limited role in a background of dysfunctional remaining liver tissue. Fatty liver is fast over riding other causes in causing cirrhosis liver and liver cancer.

Modern change in food habits and preferences, inadequate exercise, obesity, diabetes and dyslipidemia apart from alcohol are some of the causes contributing to fatty liver. A healthy lifestyle, optimum control of body

weight, good diabetic control and avoidance of alcohol are some of the prerequisites to prevent fatty liver. More than 90% of diabetic population will have fatty liver. Periodic screening is advised to grade and stage progressive disease, if any, for early intervention to arrest progression. About 30% of person with Steatohepatitis (active injury to liver) due to fat will progress to cirrhosis without causing any symptoms. Non invasive methods of assessing liver fibrosis are available to stage the disease.

Early detection of fatty liver in high risk patients like in the obese and diabetic patients will help in a longway in preventing detrimental end stage liver disease which can be remedied only by liver transplantation. The unavailability of donor liver and the cost of transplantation are forbidding. Proper awareness among all concerned will help mitigate the explosion of these advanced disease states in future.