

Experts for taking measures against eye infection

By Our Staff Reporter

Health
Dawn
5.8.07

RAWALPINDI, Aug 4: Widespread occurrence of viral eye infection, Kerato conjunctivitis, also known as "Aashobe Chashm" in local parlance, has been reported from different parts of the twin cities.

Dr Tahir Sharif, an ophthalmologist at Holy Family Hospital, told this reporter that the disease was spreading rapidly. He said he had come across certain cases, wherein the entire family was suffering from this problem.

He said the symptoms might vary from patient to patient, but the most common were severe watering of eyes, itching, irritation, redness, swelling of eyelids, thick discharge from the eyes, vision disturbances and possible flu or fever like conditions.

He said in severe conditions, the eyes might give a sub-conjunctival haemorrhage appearance.

The disease, Dr Sharif said, mostly spread through physical

contact with the infected person or with items being used by the patient. The best remedy, therefore, was avoiding direct physical contact with the people suspected to be suffering from the problem, he added.

The ophthalmologist said children were more prone to the disease because of lesser resistance. He said the infection was more common in rainy season.

He advised the infected persons to wash their eyes regularly with cold water and to keep them clean. The patients, he said, should also wear sun glasses and consult some eye specialist immediately.

He said the normal span of the disease was almost a week.

Staff Reporter From
Islamabad Adds: Dr Farooq Afzal, an eye specialists at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) talking to *Dawn*, said: "The seriousness of the disease can be gauged from the fact

that the hospital is daily receiving 20 to 25 patients suffering with this eye infection."

He said the hot and humid weather also played a role in spreading the disease, because due to sweating or irritation, people tended to touch their eyes, and if their hands were infected, they could catch the infection immediately.

Dr Afzal said the viral conjunctival infections were thought to be caused by airborne respiratory droplets or direct transfer from one's fingers to the conjunctival surface of the eyelids. After an incubation period of five to 12 days, the disease enters the acute phase, causing watery discharge and conjunctival hyperemia, he said.

Talking to this reporter, Mr Wasim, a patient, said: "I cannot remember how I contracted the disease which has forced me to avoid attending my office for a week."

More Social Security Hospitals soon

BY ASHRAF JAVED

LAHORE—The Punjab government has chalked out a plan to establish 100-bed Social Security Hospitals throughout the province and the practical work on this project would start soon.

This was informed by Advisor to CM on Health Dr Javed Asghar while talking at The Nation Forum here on Tuesday.

"The construction of new hospitals under this project in Sialkot, Gujrat, Kasur and Sheikhupura districts would be completed this year as the government is very serious about said project", he said.

Dr Javed Asghar said that the project of Social Security Hospitals had been completed under the directives of the Chief Minister Punjab, who time and again declared provision of health facilities to the people at grass roots level, atop pri-

ority of the government.

He said that the government had also decided to provide free of cost medicines and other required facilities in the emergency units of the said hospitals and the project would be extended to all the districts of the province.

He said that the main reason of patients seeking treatment in other countries like India for cardiac surgery,

was lack of required facilities in the government hospitals.

"Unfortunately our government hospitals are lacking the facility of cardiac surgery in the Cardiac Departments because no one had concentrated on this problem, he stated.

Dr Javed Asghar said that the Punjab government had decided to take some special steps at once in this regard.

He stressed upon the need for

establishing a fully equipped cardiac surgery unit in each government hospital of the province so that precious lives could be saved. In response to a question, he said that the government could not forcibly stop any citizen for going abroad for treatment of cardiac surgery or by-pass surgery.

"This concept is totally wrong that the patients of by-pass sur-

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gery and cardiac surgery are being treated in India at low cost. The expenditures in this regard are same, even low in Pakistan, he explained. However he said that the special units for cardiac surgery are not regularly working in some institutions and the government was taking required steps in this regard.

He further said that such hospitals in the country are fully equipped and have all the facili-

ties for cardiac surgery and by-pass surgery.

He said that the cardiac department in the hospitals of the province and the country as well, were being developed, so that maximum facilities could be granted to the people of the country.

"We have, qualified, experienced and expert doctors in all subjects of medicines who can resolve any situation or problem with a little effort but there is a need to utilise the available resources in this regard, the advisor said.

Dr Javed Asghar, quoting the facts and figures by the international health organisations, said that every hundredth child is suffering from heart related diseases from birth in Pakistan. Therefore the Health Department would have to make such arrangements at emergence basis to cope with this deadly disease.

Unhygienic conditions main cause

Hospitals' staff face serious health risk

By Our Correspondent

A call to Dawn 7.8.8

PESHAWAR, Aug 6: At least 50 health professionals in the city hospitals have been diagnosed positive for hepatitis B and C in the last six months because of unhygienic conditions and failure on the part of the hospitals management to adopt preventive measures in this regard, doctors and health workers told *Dawn*.

"At least 11 paramedics of the Hayatabad Medical Complex have been diagnosed positive either for Hepatitis B or C in the past six months. The number of infected people may rise in case all the employees are tested," said a doctor at the hospital.

According to him, health workers were at the risk of getting infected with different germs because there was no proper system at the hospital to protect them against pathogens. Surgeons, laboratory and blood bank technicians and operation theatre assistants have been working in a dangerous environment as they frequently come in contact with infected blood.

Similarly, 39 employees of the Khyber Teaching Hospital (KTH) and Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) are being treat-

ed for hepatitis at private clinics in Peshawar and Islamabad.

Doctors argue that health-care workers are particularly at risk of acquiring infection because any abrasion on skin provided a potential route to virus and bacteria.

There is no vaccination programme to test these workers for infected diseases and they are diagnosed only when blood samples are taken from them for any other diseases. Non-availability of surgical gloves, masks, etc., has put them at the razor's edge.

To name a few, senior surgeons Prof Dr Rahim Gul, Prof Dr Mumtaz Khattak and Dr Shabana have died of Hepatitis-C, whereas, Prof Dr Tahir Hasan is under treatment in the UK. All these doctors got the infection from needle injuries while operating the infected patients.

"At least 30 doctors have been visiting my clinic for Hepatitis-C, and all of them acquired the infection from patients at the operation theatres," said a local hepatologist.

According to him, there should be a sterilization system based on WHO's guidelines of standard of prevention of infec-

tion disease to save health workers from infections.

The Central Sterilization System Departments at the city hospitals are being run by contractors with little or no check by the hospital administrators.

The problem is further aggravated by the fact that there is no system for the surgeons to determine whether or not the gowns, gloves and equipment they are using is sterilized.

The cost of a test for Hepatitis B & C is around Rs1,000, due to which most of the hospitals avoid to get their employees tested for the infection. However, the same hospitals charge Rs625 to screen blood even if the blood donor is their employee.

The government has installed incinerators for proper disposal of hospital waste at the three teaching hospitals with each costing Rs3.2 million. These incinerators are partially functional.

However, use of old syringes, which is stated to be the main cause of hepatitis spread, is still in vogue. Garbage collectors still collect used syringes from hospitals waste which are bought by dealers who resale them without sterilizing.