

UK-based trust, partners to reach out diabetics for retinopathy

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UK-based The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust under its Avoidable Blindness Programme for Commonwealth nations aims to reach out to 25 million diabetics, who are at risk of retinopathy (meaning blindness) and also its prevention in India.

One of its significant initiatives in India, the five-year 'Diabetic Retinopathy Action Plan' involves preparing a detailed India roadmap, which envisages participation of physicians at government health systems, ophthalmologists in private sector eyecare research, besides constructive involvement of non-governmental organisations.

The plan, to be ready by October and set for implementation from January 2015, aims to build a coordinated sustainable system that can work towards prevention, early detection of blindness associated with diabetic patients and its treatment.

It aims to cover 25 towns having one million population, mostly Tier II and III locations, said GVS Murthy, vice president (south) at New Delhi-based Public Health Foundation of India, which is partnering the programme.

According to the trust, India has 60-65 million diabetic population with 6-7 million facing serious retinopathy issues.

The India programme would help the trust learn the trends and build a model, which can be replicated in other Commonwealth nations in Africa and Asia confronted with similar issues.

"The trust's commitment for the five-year initiative would be a few million pounds... mostly less than 10 million pounds (around Rs 100 crore)," said Astrid Bonfield, chief executive of The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Trust.

The trust is in advance stages of implementing a programme for treating 'Retinopathy of Prematurity' among new born babies in India. According to Bonfield, this is seen in babies delivered in less than 40 weeks, and can lead to blindness during the childhood.

A three-day National Diabetic Retinopathy Summit from April 12 in Hyderabad would deliberate upon the way forward in India with participation from the Indian Institute of Public Health, International Centre for Eye Health and the London School of Tropical Medicine.