

'India needs more technicians to detect diabetes-related eye

Press Trust of India |

India needs to train enough technicians for early detection of an eye disease associated with diabetes, as the number of patients with the ailment is expected to touch over 10 million 2030 in India, according to experts.

The disease, diabetic retinopathy (DR), may lead to loss of sight over a period, if it goes undetected.

Clare Gilbert, Professor and Co-Director, International Centre for Eye Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicines, said there are not enough ophthalmologists in India who can detect these cases in diabetic patients and hence the government and civil societies need to train technicians to detect retinopathy cases in the early stages.

"There is a need to train technicians to screen people with diabetes and retinopathy. It is not possible for the existing ophthalmologists to screen all the diabetic patients," Gilbert said at a press conference.

According to GVS Murthy, director, Indian Institute of Public Health, one out of every five diabetic patients in India suffers from retinopathy and an early detection and treatment can reduce the risk of blindness from DR by 90 per cent.

According to a study, type-2 diabetes alone affects 62.4 million people in India currently and it is estimated that this number will rise to 100 million by 2030.

"DR is a leading cause of visual impairment in India with 18 per cent of diabetics suffering from DR. Awareness of the complication in India is poor and 1/3 of the diabetics do not know about it," Murthy said.

Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, in partnership with Public Health Foundation of India and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, will be hosting the 'National Diabetic Retinopathy Summit' here from April 12 to 14.

The three-day summit is aimed at developing and agreed national strategy for the prevention, detection and treatment of DR, Murthy said.