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Public lacks awareness of diabetic retinopathy: Study

AMOGA LAXMI SUKKA/HYDERABAD

Lack of awareness about the importance of regular eye tests and uncontrolled blood sugar levels among diabetics has been resulting in diabetic retinopathy that could lead to loss of vision if not diagnosed early.

More than half of the patients visiting ophthalmologists in the country have been suffering from diabetes for over 10 years and 15 per cent have been living with the condition for over 20 years, said a study done by the Indian Institute of Public Health in consultation with other leading organisations.

A situational research conducted by the South Asia Centre for Disability Inclusive Development & Research (SACDIR) at the Indian Institute of Public Health, Hyderabad and a constituent unit of the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) highlighted that "Half of the people in the study didn't know they had diabetes until they visited an eye clinic for problems with their vision." A major finding from the analysis was the lack of attention given to the damaging impact diabetes can have on vision, with



Dignitaries during a Diabetics Retinopathy Summit at Taj Krishna in city on Friday.
Photo: Sirige Srikanth

less than a third of diabetes physicians even having a simple vision chart in their clinics. Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) is the leading cause of blindness among working adults in the country with 18 per cent of diabetics suffering from DR said Director of IIPH, GVS Murthy.

According to WHO estimates, diabetic retinopathy is responsible for four per cent of the 45 million cases of blindness throughout the world. By 2030 India will have an estimated 80 million diabetics, the highest number for any country.

A recent study (2012) conducted by National Program for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes and Cardiovascular diseases in 8 districts of Andhra Pradesh including Srikakulam, Vizag, Krishna, Prakasham, Nellore, Chittoor, Kadapa and Kurnool.

The study revealed that out of 85 lakh people who underwent for screening, 60,000 were found to be diabetic, and six lakhs having both diabetes and hypertension said Andhra Pradesh state nodal officer, T Geetha Prasadini.