

RETINOBLASTOMA



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Issue

The Retinoblastoma awareness week was held to spread knowledge about the most commonly-occurring eye cancer in young children.

Details

- Retinoblastoma is the most common cancer in the eye (malignant tumor) in small children. It can originate in one or both eyes and may be hereditary or sporadic.
- If not treated timely and is detected by seeing White Reflex (WR), it can take away vision and can also be life-threatening.

Threat of disease

It can affect one or both the eyes. It can also spread to brain through optic nerve and to the rest of the body through blood.

Symptoms

- White Reflex in the eye: Normally pupil looks red when light is focused on it but in this case it looks white or yellow when light hits it.
- Squint eye: The eye appears to be looking at the nose or towards ears.
- Pain and redness
- Bleeding from eye

Occurrence

- The disease is sporadic as well as genetic. Some mutations in genes are responsible for about 40 percent of cases.

- The responsible gene is RB1. When the gene is responsible, the cancer occurs in both the eyes. About 20 percent of victims have family history of the disease.
- It affects young children of all races but those from underserved communities are affected more due to inadequate healthcare facilities.

Prevention and treatment

The disease cannot be prevented but children with family history of retinoblastoma must be taken for regular check-up.

Treatment methods

- Cryotherapy: Using ice to destroy tumour.
- Chemotherapy: Drugs are injected into arteries and veins.
- Laser therapy: Using lasers to destroy tumours.
- Radiotherapy: Using radiation to kill tumour cells.

Challenges in treatment

The biggest challenge is misconception about the disease and late detection. This increases the mortality of the disease.

Disease burden in India

- Every year in India, about 1,500-2,000 children are diagnosed with retinoblastoma.
- Majority of them belong to lower socio-economic strata of society and nearly 60 per cent have advanced stage.

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