

Cohort study centre inaugurated at AIIMS

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A centre for the first of its kind cohort study being undertaken to determine genetic, lifestyle and socio-economic elements that are protective or risk factors for the occurrence of heart ailments or dementia in old people, was inaugurated at AIIMS here today.

The study is a collaborative project between the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Erasmus University in the Netherlands and National Brain Research Centre at Manesar in Gurgaon. It is supported by the Department of Biotechnology.

Cohort studies are type of medical research used to investigate the causes of disease, establishing links between risk factors and health outcomes. They are planned in advance and carried out over a future period of time.

The Indo-Dutch study launched in September 2014 will assess participants aged 50 or above. It has a sample size of 15,000, with equal number from urban and rural areas, the AIIMS said.

"We began the enrollment last year and with this new facility, now we have a dedicated centre for the research work. Before this, we had a stop-gap arrangement and we were using facilities of other departments," Head of Department of Neurology and Principal Investigator of the study Dr Kameshwar Prasad said.

The centre was inaugurated by Union Health Secretary C K Mishra in the presence of Secretary of Department of Biotechnology K VijayRaghavan, AIIMS Director M C Misra and Head of Department of Neurology and Counsellor for Science, Technology & Innovation at the Embassy of the Netherlands, Jelle Nijdam.

"The study would be conducted in three phases. The first phase will include a three-year research involving the participants who have consented, after which two follow-ups with a gap of three years would be undertaken. Over 1,000 participants have agreed for MRI brain scans," Prasad told PTI.

He said the study has been inspired from cohort studies conducted in Framingham, Boston in the US and Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

The focus of the study is to determine genetic, lifestyle and socio-economic factors that are protective or risk factors for the occurrence of stroke, heart attack or cognitive decline in persons aged 50 and above, Prasad said.

The urban component has populations of New Delhi and rural site will include residents of Ballabgarh and will be run from the Comprehensive Rural Health Services Project, Ballabgarh, it said.

"A total of 1,750 participants from urban site has been enrolled in the study, 1,260 have undergone various medical examinations at medical site and 1,000 have consented for the brain MRI scan," it said.

"Initiatives like the cohort centre would prove valuable in understanding the causes of the diseases and give us some direction as India is battling with duality of communicable and non-communicable diseases," Mishra said.

Mishra said, "The importance of the study derives from

the increasing portion of elderly population in the country. It is urgent and imperative that preventive strategies based on the sound epidemiological evidence are devised and implemented."

India has made outstanding gains in terms of increase in life expectancy. Population above 60 years is estimated to increase from 100 million in 2011 to 323 million in 2050.

This demographic transition is set to increase disease burden due to various non-communicable diseases. Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, cerebro-vascular diseases are likely to top the list of causes of disease burden, he said.

"This study would serve as a template to use and analyse data and give us further insight," VijayRaghavan said.

"The study targets to take AIIMS to apparently healthy people to observe them over several years to the point of development of event. In some cases, compare and contrast those with event or no event, and determine the factors underlying the event.

"This is like installing a CCTV, which records activities on daily basis and then helps finding out the cause of fire in a building," the AIIMS said.