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Indo-Dutch joint study on causes of stroke and cognitive decline

AARTI DHAR

India and the Netherlands on Thursday launched a joint research project to look into causes of stroke and dementia in the Indian population. The project will be executed by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and Erasmus Medical centre Rotterdam.

The Dutch Minister of Health, Welfare and Sports, Edith Schippers, and the Minister for Science and Technology Jaipal Reddy launched a research project here.

For this study, Department of Biotechnology (Ministry of Science and Technology) has committed Rs. 33 crore. The study consists of a large-scale, long term study following thousands of people.

Stroke mortality in India is 25 times that of malaria. Earlier research has shown that Indians may be more susceptible to stroke than their western counterparts, a statement issued by the Dutch Embassy said.

Beginning in 2015, a group of 15,000 people aged 50 and above from Delhi and Gurgaon will be followed for 10 years to assess risk factors associated with stroke and Alzheimer's disease. The findings will be compared with those of similar studies being carried out by Erasmus MC in the area around Rotterdam.

"With this study, we will get a clearer picture on which factors increase the chance of stroke. Does it have to do with genetic factors? Or are factors such as diet, hygiene and smoking or tobacco chewing more important? Answers to these questions will give us leads on how to prevent stroke and related disorders," says Professor Gabriel P. Krestin, Chairman of the Radiology Department of Erasmus MC.

Erasmus MC is one of the largest university medical centres in the Netherlands and one of the 20 best research institutes worldwide. For more than 25 years the Erasmus MC conducts large-scale population-based cohort research as one of its top priorities.

AIIMS is a national and leading medical research facility in Delhi. Three years ago, Dr. Prasad, a neurologist from AIIMS and Dr. Tiemeier, an epidemiologist from the Erasmus MC took the initiative to design and plan a large cohort study of stroke and Alzheimer's in India including 15,000 persons aged 50 years and above. This study is to chart the incidence of neurological diseases, train a new generation of medical doctors in epidemiology, and further our understanding of the causes of these non-communicable diseases. Neuro-imaging will be a key element of the new population-based study.

The majority of the disease burden in India is now caused by non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes and stroke. These diseases largely affect the middle aged and older populations. As India's population is ageing rapidly, the number of Indians suffering from NCDs will see a tremendous increase as well.

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