

'Medication can Help Control Seizures'

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Bengaluru: Epilepsy affects about 50 million people worldwide and is a major public health concern, say doctors in the city.

Based on the total projected population of India, an estimated 5.5 million people suffer from epilepsy, while about half a million new cases are reported each year.

"Epilepsy, which is a disorder of the central nervous system, is characterised by seizures due to abnormal neuronal activity in the brain. This may arise from any part of the brain and, depending upon its location, the type of seizure differs," says Dr Suresh Rao Aroor, paediatric neurologist and director, Parijma Neurodiag-

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nostic and Rehabilitation Centre.

Since there are specific drugs to treat a particular type of epileptic seizure, it is imperative to diagnose the exact location of unusual neuronal activity through tests like EEG (and in select cases, video EEG), neuroimaging (preferably MRI), genetic and blood investigations and neuropsychological evaluation, Dr Aroor adds.

"Perinatal injuries, brain infections and metabolic and genetic causes are the common causes of paediatric epilepsy and febrile seizures (FS). Head injury, family his-

tory of epilepsy and developmental delay have been found to be the risk factors for epilepsy," says Dr Aroor.

He further says that children who suffer from epilepsy as a result of birth asphyxia or perinatal complications usually have epilepsy with multiple disabilities like developmental delay, academic difficulties and behavioural problems. Hence, their treatment requires a multi-disciplinary team of doctors including paediatric neurologist, physiotherapist, child psychologist, occupational therapist and speech therapist.

"In a majority of patients, seizures can be controlled by appropriate medication. In about 20-30 per cent of pa-

tients, seizures cannot be controlled well by medicines. In such cases, surgery can result in permanent cure," says Dr Rajesh B Iyer, neurologist and epileptologist at the city's capital.

Surgery, at times, may be performed keeping the patient awake if the focus lies close to important functional areas of the brain, he adds.

"Most patients with epilepsy can lead a normal life. It is important that patients take regular medication, follow healthy lifestyle like eating food on time, avoiding sleep deprivation, practicing yoga and meditation and reducing stress levels as these measures help in preventing seizure recurrence," says Dr Iyer.