Alarming Increase of Diabetes Mellitus and Coronary Heart Disease in India. What are its Causes and how can we contain it?

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Abstract

The last 30 years have witnessed a malignant increase in prevalence of diabetes mellitus (DM) in our country particularly in urban areas (1). This is also true for the rising number of coronary heart disease (CHD) patients in the country (2-5). Further, the occurrence of CHD in DM has now acquired epidemic form, which has become a major health problem in the conglomeration of life style diseases in the South East Asia region (1).

Many studies have consistently shown that people with diabetes are 2 to 4 times more prone to develop CHD as compared to non-diabetics (4-7). Several special features have been attributed to the occurrence of CHD in diabetics (1). It tends to occur at an early age, is usually more extensive and severe or is found in virulent form which is rapidly progressive. Post-menopausal women with diabetes are especially at higher risk for CHD than men (8,9). Further, the patients of CHD with diabetes have worse prognosis (10,11). An excessive CHD mortality among diabetic individuals has been reported in a number of prospective studies encompassing a variety of ethnic and racial groups (12,13). However, currently as a population, Indians are most susceptible to all the three entities namely CHD, diabetes and occurrence of CHD in diabetes (14,1).

In the last two decades, with the rapid progress in several areas, now India as a country is transforming itself from developing to a developed nation. With the increasing trend in several life style diseases, we will have to make enormous efforts to contain them. Therefore, in this article, attempts have been made to identify the present epidemiological situation of DM and CHD, India specific risk factors responsible for their increase and efforts required to be made for containing and later arresting this alarming increase.