

Aravind hospitals-WDF tie up to combat diabetic retinopathy

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Madurai, April 10: The Aravind Eye Hospital has tied up with the World Diabetes Foundation (WDF), to prevent diabetic retinopathy, the sixth most frequent cause for blindness in India.

Dr Anil Kapoor, Vice Chairman of the WDF said, the need for the provision of eye care was evident, as many persons with poorly controlled diabetes would eventually develop diabetic retinopathy if they lived long enough. He said that more people succumbed to diabetes than AIDS each year.

The incidence of diabetes retinopathy in India is very high and the magnitude of the problem has not been realised at present.

The disease was asymptomatic almost until the stage where the patients become blind. Thus, it was necessary to screen the patients at a very early stage.

There was a great need to create awareness on this problem as to the solution, both amongst the general pub-

lic as well as health professionals.

Dr P Namperumalsamy, Director of Aravind Eye Hospital said that their own unpublished data estimated that at least 28.85 per cent persons have diabetic retinopathy, irrespective of the duration of diabetes, which means that 14 million diabetics would need to be closely monitored.

Timely treatment can prevent up to 60 to 70 per cent of vision loss from diabetic retinopathy. Despite this vision loss from diabetic retinopathy still continues to occur, he said.

The retinopathy management project supported by the World Diabetes Foundation would attempt to meet the current need for a holistic model including awareness creation, medical services delivery, and training to deal with the problems of diabetes and diabetic retinopathy in the community.

The project aims to create awareness in collaboration with diabetologists to screen diabetic patients for diabetic retinopathy and provide appropriate treatment at the hospital in Tirunelveli district.

In addition, this project would also screen patients from the general population for diabetes and will have in place a mechanism for referral patients for treatment of diabetes.

The retinopathy project also harnesses the advantages of information technology through the establishment of rural remote screening in Than and a mobile unit to screen patients through digital imaging, the results which would be transmitted to a reading and grading centre at Aravind Eye Hospital.

Leif Fenger Jensen, Managing Director of the WDF said that long term financial sustainability to run the project was anticipated.

With the experience gained during the project period, a screening and service delivery model would be developed that would benefit the national as well as international blindness programmes.

Dr Venkataswamy founder of Aravind Eye Hospital, Dr Kim, Chief Retina Vitreous Services were among others present.