

Hindustan Times hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI • METRO

Price along with Hindustan Rs. 5.00 / Price along with Mint Rs. 4.75

METRO

For more, log on to hindustantimes.com

Rare surgery saves kid's life

Unique procedure at Apollo — only the world's second — saves her liver

Sanchita Sharma
New Delhi, February 4

IN A rare surgery — only the second time in the world — surgeons at Apollo Hospital used the appendix of a child to treat Byler's Disease, a genetic disorder that causes the buildup of bile in the body, leading to liver failure (cirrhosis).

In such cases, liver transplantation, a major surgery, is the only treatment.

Four-and-a-half-year-old Triveni Pawar had come to Apollo from Jodhpur last November with an itch so acute that her whole body was covered with welts caused by scratching. Even tufts of hair had fallen out because of secondary infections on scratch wounds on her scalp. "The itching was so bad that she couldn't sleep, eat properly or go to school. She didn't wear clothes at home because it irritated her skin," said mother Gunjan, a housewife.

KNOW THE FACTS



Triveni (centre) with her parents.
MOHD ZAKIR/HT

WHAT IS BYLER'S DISEASE?

It is a genetic disorder that causes the buildup of bile (which helps digest fats) in the body, leading to liver failure

WHAT ARE ITS SYMPTOMS?

Persistent jaundice, fat malabsorption, protein loss, deficiency of fat-soluble vitamins such as A, E and K, poor growth

leading to short stature, stumpy fingers and toes and constant itching caused by bile accumulation in bloodstream

WHAT WAS TRIVENI'S PROBLEM?

Bile is produced in liver from where it goes to the gall bladder and then the intestines. In her case, bile did not get drained from the liver into the intestine, leading to itching

Triveni was born with Byler's Disease (also known as progressive familial intrahepatic cholestasis), the genetic disease which is rare in India though fairly well documented in the US.

Bile — which helps the body digest fats — is produced in the liver from where it goes to the

gall bladder and eventually into the intestines. In Triveni's case, the bile did not get drained from the liver cells into the intestine. To drain the excess bile, surgeons used her appendix to create a bypass from her gall bladder to the surface of the skin through a 2-mm hole on her right abdomen just

below the panty line.

"The surgery is conventionally done using a section of the small intestine to construct a bypass for the bile from the gall bladder to the large intestine or the skin surface. For us, the appendix was a natural choice because it has no function in the body, is narrower than the intes-

tine and so needs a smaller opening (stoma) on the skin's surface, and best of all, it prevented surgical shortening of the intestine," said Dr Sujit K. Chowdhary, senior consultant in paediatric surgery at Apollo.

"She was cured by a relatively simple surgery. If her condition had not been treated, she would have needed a liver transplantation, a major surgery for both donor and recipient. She would also have had to take drugs to suppress her immunity all her life to prevent the rejection of the transplanted liver," said Dr Anupam Sibal, senior consultant paediatric gastroenterologist at Apollo who is treating her.

Three months on, Triveni looks like any other girl her age. "We have rediscovered what it feels like to sleep through the night. All these years, the itching kept her up," said father Rajesh, an advocate.

sanchitasharma@hindustantimes.com

Spot the infection

DIJESHWAR SINGH/HT

Chickenpox is affecting even those who were vaccinated— with mild symptoms

Rhythmia Kaul

THE SUDDEN change in weather has caused a spurt not only in viral fever and asthma, but also chickenpox, which is affecting young children across the country.

"This year chickenpox is being reported a month earlier. We usually get cases in May or June. Though most people go to general practitioners, this year even hospitals are getting occasional cases," said Dr Vandana Jain, assistant professor, department of paediatrics, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). This month alone, she has diagnosed 20 such cases.

In private clinics, the numbers are much higher. "I saw four chickenpox cases last week, which is much more than what I see every year," said Dr Anupam Sibal, group medical director and senior consultant paediatrics, Apollo Hospital, Delhi.

What is interesting about this year's outbreak is that most children who had the infection had been vaccinated against the disease. What's happening? "Chickenpox is highly contagious but the vaccine does scale down the severity of the attack," said Dr Sibal.

Chickenpox is highly infectious and it usually affects children under 12 years. The infection comes with high fever, congestion of eyes and itchy, red spots, which usually appear first on the chest and upper abdomen and later cover the entire body

turn into small blisters that dry up and form scabs over a week.

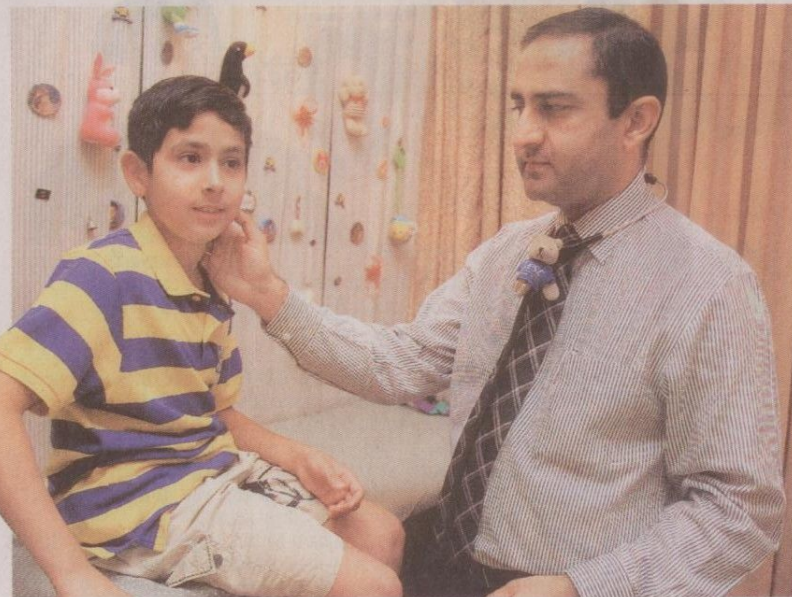
A vaccine is available and recommended for children who have not had the infection by the age of 12. "It's not a cheap vaccine but people prefer to give it to teenagers, as the chickenpox season usually coincides with Board and other entrance exams. Those who get chickenpox even after vaccination, have fewer rashes and the and recovery time is faster," said Dr Sibal.

However, how long the protection lasts after a single dose is still an issue of debate. "A single dose, as of now, has not shown to be giving life-long protection. Those who can afford it should take it, otherwise it is not mandatory as you usually develop immunity once you've had the infection," said Dr Jain.

Treatment is symptomatic — paracetamol for fever, and sponging using a mixture of boric acid and cold water to reduce itching.

Like most viral fevers, the disease is self-limiting and usually gets over in 10 days to two weeks.

One shot costs Rs 1,000, with physician's charges making parents poorer by about Rs 1,500. "It is optional, but there is no point getting a shot after rashes appear. The incubation period of chickenpox is 18 days, so by the time rashes appear and the disease is diagnosed, the child has already infected several other people," says Dr Sibal.



TIMELY CHECK: Dr Anupam Sibal examines a patient for chickenpox symptoms

WATCH OUT FOR

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- An itchy rash that usually begins in the abdomen and face then spreads to limbs
- The small red spots develop into blisters within hours and into scabs within a day or two
- New blisters appear after three to six days. The infected person may have fever
- It lasts 7 to 10 days in children and longer in adults
- Symptoms are mild in young children

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

- It spreads from person to person through direct contact with infected droplets (sneezing, coughing) or contact with fluid from a blister
 - A pregnant woman with chickenpox can infect the baby before birth. Mothers with chickenpox can also infect their newborns
- HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE VACCINE?**
It prevents infection in some cases and in most cases, makes the symptoms milder