

Non-invasive device to assess liver fibrosis

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Singapore: In the run up to World Hepatitis Day, to be commemorated on July 28, one of the main goals globally is to raise awareness about viral hepatitis and its causes. Despite its staggering toll on human health, hepatitis remains a largely unknown, undiagnosed and untreated group of diseases. Experts are, therefore, reiterating the importance of receiving appropriate treatment through timely diagnosis to lower death rates and reduce the suffering of patients.

As part of that endeavor to reduce patient suffering, novel and non-invasive techniques are available to diagnose liver diseases. One such tool is Fibroscan, a new device that assesses liver fibrosis non-invasively, unlike a liver biopsy that is invasive and painful. Diagnosing fibrosis in patients with chronic hepatitis, Fibroscan has been shown to be accurate and requires no liver biopsy in this case.

"Fibrosis progression is highly unpredictable and an accurate result about the extent of damage to the patient's liver is extremely important. Fibroscan is a newer investigation modality which gives us an idea of the extent of damage to the liver. In patients with metabolic disorder like fatty liver and alcoholic liver disease, it serves as next best to biopsy as it is completely safe and non invasive," said Dr Ajay Kumar, senior consultant, gastroenterology, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals.

An easy-to-use tool, Fibroscan provides multiple controls for reliable, accurate and reproducible assessments of liver tissue stiffness. Apart from measuring liver stiffness, Fibroscan allows assessment of Controlled Attenuation Parameter, developed to detect liver steatosis. The only clinically validated device for non-invasive fibrosis and steatosis quantification, Fibroscan

aids in decision making, enhancing both patient and practice management.

Dr S L Broor, senior consultant-gastroenterology, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, elaborated on the technique. "To measure the stiffness or elasticity of the liver, Fibroscan uses an ultrasound scan to create waves and measure their speed. This tests the stiffness of the liver indicating the extent of liver fibrosis. Although this scan is less sensitive in detecting mild or moderate liver fibrosis, it is very sensitive at ascertaining severe degree of damage. Patients having chronic liver disease in which liver biopsy cannot be done for fear of bleeding risk, Fibroscan is very useful to assess the liver damage and plan treatment."

Dr Amitabh Dutta, senior consultant, gastroenterology, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, added, "Hepatitis can prevent the liver from performing numerous critical functions. Some common liver disorders such as Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and Hepatitis E are caused by viruses that attack and damage the liver. It is imperative for people to fully comprehend the liver's critical role in maintaining their overall health and well-being. Until that happens, Hepatitis will continue to debilitate patients' lives and claim more victims year after year."