

'Suicide disease' higher among above 40

Hospital Conducts Year-Long Study; Surgical Procedure Success Rate As High As 98%

Umesh Isalkar
@timesgroup.com

Pune: Bollywood actor Salman Khan is known to effortlessly deal with on-screen villains, however, in real life, he had to deal with a painful nerve condition called trigeminal neuralgia in 2011.

A 10-year-long study conducted by the Deenanath Mangeshkar Hospital (DMH) found that the highest incidence of the nerve disorder commonly described as 'suicide disease' is seen in the 40 to 60 age bracket, though the disease is known to strike from early teens to the late 80s.

As many as 943 patients with three months to 10 years of follow-up care have undergone a surgical procedure called microvascular decompression (MVD) surgery for this facial pain disorder with 98% success rate.

Not just Pune, patients came from Aurangabad, Beed, Jalna, Kolhapur, Karad, Sattara, Amaravati and Nagpur and also from Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.

"Trigeminal neuralgia is more common among women for reasons not known yet. It is not related to any particular profession but genetic predisposition undoubtedly plays a role. From farmers to white collar professionals, the common factor was that most of the patients were in the 40 to 50 age group," said neurosurgeon Jaydev Panchwagh of Deena-

WHAT IS TRIGEMINAL NEURALGIA

Trigeminal neuralgia is a chronic pain condition that affects the trigeminal nerve, which carries sensation from your face to the brain. In people with trigeminal neuralgia, even mild stimulation like brushing teeth or putting on makeup may trigger a jolt of excruciating pain

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENS

- ▶ With age, blood vessels become hardened and a bit elongated. The condition is called ectasia, which is dilation or distention of a tubular structure
- ▶ If a person has one or more blood vessels very near to the root entry zone (REZ) of the nerve as determined genetically, then with advancing age and ectasia, these vessels start compressing the REZ with continuous pulsations
- ▶ This sets the stage for recurrent short-circuiting and episodes of pain. The damage is usually progressive after this

STUDY OF 943 PATIENTS

- ▶ As many as 943 patients have undergone surgical procedure called microvascular decompression (MVD) with three to 10 years of follow-up care at the Deenanath Mangeshkar hospital in Pune for trigeminal neuralgia. The success rate was 98%
- ▶ 74% of the remaining patients got 70% relief but needed very small dose of medicines
- ▶ The success rate was better when the procedure

nath Mangeshkar hospital who performed the surgery on 943 patients.

But it can affect anybody. "Our youngest patient is a 17-year-old girl and oldest is an 84-year-old man," he said.

Patients suffering from the condition describe the pain as 'sudden lancinating', 'burning', 'sensation of thousand needles pricking', 'as if somebody threw chilly powder on one side of the face' or like an electric shock.

Panchwagh rues the fact

that these patients are still directed to psychiatrists and dentists for treatment and potential for cure is not offered in the early phase of the condition.

The goal of the surgery is to stop the blood vessel from compressing or damaging the trigeminal nerve.

"Though multiple treatments are available, microvascular decompression surgery (MVD) in carefully chosen patients is the only procedure which removes the causative element offering a chance for

cure and freedom from drugs without causing any damage to the nerve," said Panchwagh who is also founder-chairman of Synapse Brain and Spine foundation.

This is the only procedure which treats the basic cause of the trigeminal neuralgia, as in majority of cases, compression of the nerve by blood vessels.

"The recurrence rate in our patients is 3%. Twenty seven of the 943 patients have had recurrence till date and among them nine needed re-surgery. The re-

was done fairly early in the course of the disease

- ▶ The success rate was also better when MVD was used as the first intervention method
- ▶ The procedure was very useful even among the elderly. The oldest patient was 84-years-old
- ▶ 95% of the patients shared the view that the choice of surgery should have been offered to them earlier and said they will recommend this surgery to other patients

THE CHALLENGES

▶ For many years, the exact cause of trigeminal neuralgia was not known

▶ The treatment was difficult. In severe cases, it could destroy the nerve in part or totally* With more awareness on the microvascular decompression theory, the treatment was aimed at relieving the pain without destroying the nerve

▶ The old generation microscopes and old neuroanaesthesia drugs posed a challenge in the early phase

▶ Advancement in instrumentation and optics coupled with improved intra- and post-operative anaesthesia care helped neurosurgeons in improving the procedure

▶ In India, however, the fight for the best equipments because of high cost is still going on

▶ Three tesla magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) with excellent visualisation of the root entry zone (REZ) is very useful for elucidation of the exact aetiology (cause) in TN and other disorders

WHAT PATIENTS SAY

"I experienced episodes of intense pain for seven years. I consulted five dentists and one of them even extracted my teeth. Next, I consulted two neurologists. I got permanent relief only after undergoing the MVD surgery

— Pandurang Bhandare (70) | UNDERWENT SURGERY EIGHT YEARS AGO

"I was suffering from a very severe pain on the right side of my face for the last four years. I consulted doctors in Beed, Latur, Solapur and Hyderabad but the medications only gave me temporary relief. There is such relief after the surgery

— Naresh Walmiki (50) | UNDERWENT SURGERY ON AUGUST 25

