

Man treated for spasticity at city hospital

COIMBATORE, MAY 8

A 50 year old man, suffering from spasticity (stiffness), was successfully treated at the Kovai Medical Center & Hospital by Dr. Arul Selvan Consultant Neurologist and Dr. Ram Narayanan visiting consultant Neurosurgeon. The doctors used Baclofen pump, a new technique for treating patients suffering from neurological disorders. Mr. Sankaran from Salem had spastic weakness of arms and legs for more than 10 years. He had primary lateral sclerosis a rare form of motor neuron disease. He could not sleep because of painful spasms.

The consultants applied

the Baclofen Pump technique on the patient last week and Sankaran recovered from his spasticity. He is improved remarkably and his wife commented that after many years her husband had a comfortable sleep. The doctors said that spasticity is a common debilitating neurological condition. It results in significant disability, pain, spasms and poor hygiene. Spasticity is a motor disorder characterized by stiffness and painful spasms in arms and legs. It results from velocity-dependent increase in tonic stretch reflexes with exaggerated tendon jerks, resulting from hyperexcitability of motor neurons. It is caused by stroke, cerebral palsy, motor

neurone disease, spinal cord injury, cervical myelopathy and hereditary spastic paraplegia to name few.

Drugs such as tizanidine, baclofen, diazepam and dantrolene are effective. The effectiveness of medications vary between individuals, and also on location of lesion (in the brain or the spinal cord). It also makes them sleepy.

Botulinium injections into muscle belly to attempt to dampen the signals between nerve and muscle is also useful. Surgery could be required for a tendon release in the case of a severe muscle imbalance leading to contracture. In spastic cerebral palsy, selective dorsal rhizotomy has also been

used to decrease muscle overactivity. Although these procedures are available neurologists are faced with increasing challenge to deal with this condition.

Explaining the technique, Dr Arul Selvan said that the procedure for insertion of an intrathecal baclofen pump lasts 1-1.5 hours. The pump is inserted under the covering of the abdominal muscles while the patient is under a general anesthetic. A small catheter is inserted through a needle into the spinal fluid and is threaded upward toward the neck. The catheter is tunneled under the skin to the abdomen and is connected to the pump. The pump is filled with the drug baclofen and

is programmed by a computer to continuously release a specified dose that is determined by the physician. It is sufficient to fill this pump once in a year. Dr Arul Selvan and Dr. Ram Narayanan at KMCH, who have rich experience in treating this disorder, successfully performed this operation first time in Coimbatore.

Dr. Nalla G Palaniswami, Chairman KMCH, who congratulated the doctors for this unique surgery, commented that "KMCH is committed to provide high class quality medical care and continues to excel in innovative technologies like these. Several patients will be benefited from this".