

Liver, digestive care unit opens on EM Bypass

DEBRAJ MITRA

Calcutta: A unit dedicated to treating liver and gastroenterological diseases was launched at a private hospital off EM Bypass on Friday.

The Institute of Liver and Digestive Disorders and Liver Care Centre at Manipal Hospital EM Bypass is equipped to perform liver transplant surgeries, alongside other medical and surgical procedures for the liver and the digestive system, doctors said at the launch.

They flagged a wide gap between the number of liver transplants required and the actual number performed in India as a whole, and in eastern India in particular.

"In the entire country, around 50,000 liver transplants are needed every year. All hospitals together perform barely 5,000. So, there is a deficit of around 45,000. The gap is acute in eastern India, where only a handful of liver transplant surgeries happen every year," said Ayanabh Deb Gupta, regional director, Manipal Hospitals East.

Jayanth Reddy, a leading liver transplant surgeon who heads the department of HPB (hepato-pancreato-biliary) surgery, multi-organ abdominal transplant and hepatology at Manipal Hospitals, Bangalore, will lead the team of surgeons at the new unit, travelling to Calcutta every month, an official said at the launch.

"Liver transplantation in eastern India continues to remain significantly underutilised, largely due to a lack of awareness, infrastructure, skilled personnel and timely referral. In Calcutta, the total number of liver transplants performed last year was only



Doctors and officials at the launch of the new unit on Friday

around 25, far below the requirement," Reddy said at the launch.

"Liver transplantation is a highly complex surgery, typically involving deceased or brain-dead donors, though living liver donations also happen in lesser numbers. Indian law mandates that the live liver donor must be related to the recipient. A person has only one liver. A living donor can donate a part of her liver. A liver takes six to eight weeks to regrow to its original form. But many people don't know this," Reddy said.

In Bengaluru, around 500 liver transplants happen annually, he added.

Liver disease is emerging as a major health concern in eastern India, with studies indicating that nearly one in five adults may be affected by fatty liver disease, doctors said at the launch.

Despite this growing burden, access to advanced interventions such as liver transplants has remained limited within the region, often requiring patients to travel long

distances to other states for treatment.

"With the launch of this institute, by integrating specialised expertise and advanced infrastructure, we aim to enable patients to access timely, seamless, and end-to-end treatment closer to home. Not only for people in Bengal but also for the Northeast," said Deb Gupta.

Pradeepta Kumar Sethy, director of gastroenterology at Manipal Hospital EM Bypass and Mukundapur cluster, said: "In eastern India, over 50% of chronic liver disease cases are linked to alcohol, while nearly 20% of Indians are affected by fatty liver disease, contributing to more than 2 lakh deaths annually, underscoring a rapidly growing health burden. With the launch of this institute, we are bringing together the entire spectrum of liver and digestive care from advanced diagnostics and therapeutic endoscopy to minimally invasive interventions and a robust liver transplant programme."

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