

Bringing women's health to the fore

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ACE docs will hold 'Women in Summit on Health' today

WOMAN'S disease. That may no longer be spoken about in hushed tones or with a condescending nudge and a wink.

Apollo Centre of Excellence for Women, along with Johns Hopkins Department of Gynaecology and Obstetrics, is set to bring in solid scientific backing when it comes to diseases and disorders that strike women. Menopause and climacteric changes, diabetes during pregnancy, epilepsy and asthma when they strike women, cancer screening, urinary incontinence and other pregnancy-related issues could be the topics of joint research to be undertaken by the two institutions.

Dr Harold E Fox, the Gynaecologist/Obstetrician-in-chief at Johns Hopkins, who is here to participate in Women's Wellness Lecture Series organised by Apollo Hospital and the Duchess Club, said pelvic floor disorders strike women often, but there is no clear understanding on how some women are more prone to problems like urinary incontinence while others, despite having gone through similar circumstances, are spared. One of these issues is childbirth, which is believed to be the most common causative factor.

Dr Fox is a Women in Summit on Health faculty, an event organised on Saturday July 22, by physicians at Apollo Centre of Excellence for Women (ACE).

"With longevity increasing, women in their 70s, who have never given birth to children are as prone to pelvic floor disorders as those who have. Likewise, though vaccination against Human Papilloma Virus is a preventive step for cervical cancer, the presence of the virus in itself does not result in cancer," Dr Fox said and added more research was needed to understand such issues.

"Very often, involved in myriad responsibilities, those at workplace, or as a mother or as a life partner, the woman gives less priority to her health. Clinics like ACE can provide one-stop health service for women," he said.

Dr Fox has also been working in the area of high-risk birth, a major

area of collaboration that Apollo has on its wishlist.

Dr Prithika Chary said, given the high rate of incidence of gestational diabetes and issues of big baby vs small baby increasing risk during pregnancy, the centre will work with Johns Hopkins to set up a Gestational Diabetes Registry.

Another area in which the centre wants to emulate John Hopkins's methodology is in the follow up to pap smear screening in women.

Dr Jaishree Gajaraj, senior consultant, said while awareness was increasing about cervical cancers, smear were still being conducted randomly and treatment offered on individual basis. "We need an organised system of call and recall

which enables us to select and offer recall on regular basis," she said.

The two institutions would also be collaborating on continuing medical education programmes, telemedicine, second opinion services, and participation in clinical trials. Johns Hopkins, on its part, has evinced interest in carrying out collaborative work with the Cardiology Department of Apollo Hospitals. The Women's Centre has specific clinics for problems related to the vulva (in the face of increasing infection), climacteric medicine clinic, menorrhagia clinic (for those with menstrual problems), fibroid clinic, apart from the endocrinology, growth and puberty clinics. For details, contact ACE at 15, Gandhi Mandapam Road, Kotturpuram, or at 24471155 or 24471212.