Bengaluru doctor Kiron Varghese offers free angioplasty to poor patients

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Bengaluru: At a time when only the rich can afford and have access to quality healthcare in India, a doctor in a private hospital in this tech hub is offering free angioplasty to the poor, who are no less deserving for it.

"I have been wanting to treat the poor free as they can't afford the prohibitive cost of quality treatment," Kiron Varghese, head of cardiology at St John's Medical College & Hospital, told IANS.

With funds raised from friends and well-wishers, Varghese, 59, will perform about 30 angioplasty surgeries on the heart patients of the economically weaker sections over a month, till February 19.

Angioplasty, which involves insertion of a tube or a stent to widen blocked arteries, costs Rs 1-2 lakh at private hospitals.

As only a limited number of surgeries can be performed with the funds raised, younger patients and breadwinners of their families will get preference for the surgery," said Varghese.

One arterial block of each patient will be cleared through angioplasty so as to benefit the maximum numbers.

Patients requiring immediate surgery will be selected through a screening process.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Indians suffer most from cardiovascular diseases globally, with a fifth of deaths due to heart ailments in the Indian subcontinent.

Awareness of the dreaded disease, however, is low, especially in rural areas, a study commissioned by global medical technology trade association Advanced Medical Technology Association (AdvaMed), found.

Though the cost of an angioplasty at state-run hospitals is less than in private hospitals, shortage of catheterisation laboratories (an examination room with imaging equipment to visualise heart's arteries) and dearth of skilled cardiologists, make them unable to meet the demand and risk a heart patient's life, said the AdvaMed study released last year.

"The arterial blocks are more common among men in the 40-60 age group," added Varghese.

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