

SICKLE CELL

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Sickle Cell Disease is a group of inherited red blood cell disorders that affect haemoglobin, the protein that carries oxygen through the body. Normally, red blood cells are disc-shaped and flexible enough to move easily through the blood vessels. In sickle cell disease, red blood cells become crescent- or "sickle"-shaped due to a genetic mutation. These sickled red blood cells do not bend or move easily and can block blood flow to the rest of the body. The blocked blood flow through the body can lead to serious problems, including stroke, eye problems, infections, and episodes of pain called pain crises. Sickle cell disease is a lifelong illness. **Sickle cell anaemia cannot be cured but can be treated.**

SICKLE CELL DISEASE IN INDIA:

India has been ranked the country with the second highest numbers of predicted SCD births, with 42,016 [interquartile range (IQR): 35,347-50,919] new-borns estimated to have been born with sickle cell anaemia in 20104. SCD is characterized by considerable variability in clinical severity. **3% of India's tribal population suffers from sickle cell anaemia, another 23% is it carrier. Sickle cell anaemia is a genetic disorder that cannot be cured but only be treated.** Proper interventions, modern treatments and therapy of tribal communities in the Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, have been found to lessen the disease burden over a period of time. **The normal lifespan of a sickle cell anaemia patient is approximately 40 years.** Proper interventions and modern treatments and therapy have been found to lessen the burden of the disease over a period of time.

How we at ROTARY International can help the sickle cell disease affected?

- **AWARENESS CAMPS:** can be organised with District Health Department, we may have blood and other tests. Regular awareness drives and camps can educate the people about the sickle cell and its effects.
- **CHECK-UPS:** Routinely screen new-borns for sickle cell so that treatment can begin as soon as possible. Early diagnosis and treatment can reduce the risk of complications.
- **RECOMMEND:** the suspected patients for Haemoglobin electrophoresis which is a blood test that can determine if a person is a carrier of sickle cell, or has any of the diseases associated with the sickle cell gene.
- **Marriage counselling** will go a long way in arresting the spread of the disease.
- **Screening** all age groups is essential from new-born to the old, with emphasis on the adolescents, antenatal women and new-born. When screening antenatal women for sickle cell diseases, husbands may also be screened to ensure the child will not be at risk. If a foetus is found to have sickle cell disease legal medical termination of pregnancy may be advised.

