

Editorial-Educational

The International Conference on Sickle Cell Disease: Management and Prevention

Shaikha Al-Arrayed, MB, ChB, DHCG, PhD*

The International conference on sickle cell disease: management and prevention was held in Bahrain on 5-7 February 2013 at the Ritz Carlton Hotel. The conference was organized under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, the prime minister.

The purpose of this conference is to promote health and improve outcomes among people with blood disorder. The primary theme of the conference was “Hand in hand toward better life for SCD patients”.

More than forty international, regional and national experts participated in the conference. They presented 50 oral studies and 10 poster presentations. The conference was an opportunity to strengthen communication and networking, to share best practices and improve the health of blood disorders sufferers.

The world health organization recognized sickle cell disease and other genetic blood disorders as public health problems in the whole world; Asia, Africa, America and Europe. The impact of sickle-cell anemia in particular and other genetic disease in general on global mortality and morbidity is well-documented especially in developing countries. In addition, the suffering of patients and families affected by the disease is immeasurable.

Important health issues were discussed in the conference, such as protocols for pain management, prevention and treatment of opiate addiction, avoidance of causes of death in sickle cell disease, etc. Avoidance of complications, such as acute chest syndrome, stroke, renal failure, vascular necrosis, etc. were discussed.

Treatments, such as hydroxyurea therapy, blood transfusion, surgical management, hematopoietic stem cell transplant, opiate detoxification and rehabilitation were addressed.

* Chairperson, Scientific Committee of the Conference
Chairperson, Genetic Department
Salmaniya Medical Complex
Kingdom of Bahrain
Email: ssarayed@batelco.com.bh

Conference Recommendations:

1. To establish a national committee in collaboration with other ministries; the objective is to raise the economic, social and educational standards of patients.
2. To implement comprehensive national, integrated programs for the prevention and management of sickle-cell anemia, including surveillance, dissemination of information, awareness-raising, counseling and screening; the aim is to reduce the incidence, morbidity and mortality associated with this genetic disease.
3. To develop systematic medical-genetics services and holistic care within existing secondary and primary health care systems in partnership with national government agencies and non-governmental organizations, including parent or patient organizations.
4. To promote relevant community education, health counseling in consideration of the ethical, legal and social issues and to promote public awareness about the hemoglobin disorders.
5. The conference encourages the integration of genetic counseling, prenatal testing and pre-implantation genetic diagnostic techniques within the health system, while taking into account the moral imperatives and legal controls regarding the confidentiality of information and the importance of respecting the psychological, religious and social issues.
6. To upgrade human resources capacity to implement the programs for the care and prevention of sickle cell disease through training and education.
7. To strengthen the pre-marital counseling and screening services, ensuring the autonomy of couples to be married.
8. To study the development of stem cell transplant services in Bahrain as a measure to cure sickle cell disease and other genetic diseases.
9. To support research in the prevention and care of hemoglobin disorders.
10. To follow the current international guidelines for quality management of patients with sickle cell disease; at the same time to keep track of new evidence based developments, which would improve the health of patients, prevent and manage complications.
11. To develop networks of regional and global partnerships for disseminating information about better practice and the introduction of stem cell transplant technology.

CONCLUSION

Sickle cell disease is a major health problem in Bahrain, which is taxing health facilities. Recently, Bahrain has established sickle cell unit made of 120 beds (80 beds at Salmaniya Medical Complex (SMC) and 40 beds at the Ebrahim Khalil Kanoo Health Center). The unit has contributed in saving lives and reducing complications.