Dr Mammen Chandy highlights benefits of genomics to diagnose & monitor CML at Haematocon 2015

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The increasing role played by genomics particularly those related to hematological diseases is significant, said Dr Mammen Chandy, director, Tata Medical Centre, Kolkata.

Genomics has allowed medical experts to transform treatment modalities just like the developments in precision technology used in carpet bombing and the advances seen in sniper shooting, said Dr Chandy in his keynote address at the Haematocon 2015 which is the 56th annual meeting of the Indian Society of Haematology and Blood Transfusion (ISHBT) held in Bengaluru recently.

Dr Chandy who delivered the Dr JB Chatterjee Oration stated that in an era of genomic medicine there is no other specialty that illustrates this better than haematology. For instance, the diagnosis, ability to monitor and treat the Chronic Myeloid Leukemia (CML) with advanced techniques has now transformed the life of the patients.

He stated that the survival rates of patients suffering from CML has increased over a period of time and today CML is like diabetes where patients can pop a pill and carry on with life as if nothing ever happened.

The area of molecular biology is has provided access to targeted therapies for the benefit of the patients. Especially in the case of solid tumours where multiple targeted pathways exists, medical experts will need to be cautious when these are adopted for routine clinical practice. Therefore no one size fits all and it has to be used appropriately, where its application makes financial benefit to the patient, he said.

With the advent of new technologies such as next generation sequencing (NGS) and improved analytics, algorithms and tools for genomic data analysis in the recent years, decoding an individual's genome has gone through a revolution by exponentially reducing sequencing cost while increasing processing speed. Genetic testing has so far gained considerable traction in clinical setting for prevention, diagnosis, treatment and management of diseases with an underlying genetic reason, he said.