

News » City News » Chennai News » Doctors to gather gene data to help treat heart disease better

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Short resume:

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CHENNAI: A group of [doctors](#) in [Chennai](#) plans to gather genetic data on thousands of patients to find out if genetic differences explain why [heart](#) disease struck some at a very young age or why it progressed and killed others in less than five years.

At a press conference on Wednesday, the doctors from

Madras Medical Mission hospital said they would join a group of scientists hoping that their research on those key issue would help them personalise treatment for their patients. "It is probably the future of medicine," said MMM director of cardiology Dr Ajit Mullasari, who has been working on genetic research for the past five years. The current standard of care may be the safest, but it is also "one size fits all." That, doctors say, is not sufficient. "We still do not why half of our patients don't respond adequately to some medicines. It happens even with commonly administered cholesterol-lowering drugs," he said.

Though the subject is still in its infancy, studies across the globe are showing how genes play a crucial role. For years now, oncologists have been trying to develop therapies that will help destroy just the cancer cells so the normal cells are not affected and the side-effects are minimised. In cardiac care, research conducted in several developed countries has identified genes that cause heart diseases, said paediatric cardiologist Dr K Sivakumar. "Our aim is to see if we have a similar set of genes. We also have to see if we have new ones," he said.

For this, the team of doctors has tied up with MedGenome, a genome-based diagnostics and research firm, to study the genetic, molecular and environmental causes of heart diseases rather than their physical signs and symptoms. The doctors will focus on congenital heart [disease](#), pulmonary artery hypertension and cardiomyopathy.

They admit that the next challenge will be in figuring out what it all means and what to do next. "Most pharmaceutical companies are looking for information on this from large databases. It will help them tailor a combination [of drugs] for every patient," said MedGenome chief operating officer V L Ramprasad. "Or we may have scientific advances in editing genes," he said.

As of now, doctors aren't exactly sure, but they say they want to be adequately prepared. "Scientists in most parts of the world are collecting data. We can't be left behind," said Dr Mullasari.