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Many are at risk due to misdiagnosis of encephalitis: Study

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A recent survey revealed that many are at risk due to misdiagnosis of encephalitis, a deadly brain inflammation. Over half of the surveyed Indian emergency medical professionals missed encephalitis as a potential diagnosis even when presented with common symptoms.

Many of those surveyed underestimate the severity of encephalitis, with 62 per cent not ranking death as a possible patient outcome following delayed recognition and treatment of encephalitis. This lack of awareness leads to delayed diagnosis and treatment, and poorer patient outcome with death rate reaching up to 40 per cent while survivors often experience debilitating long-term disabilities.

While less than half (45 per cent) of emergency medical professionals felt confident in recognizing encephalitis, 83 per cent somewhat or strongly agreed they'd benefit from more training. This critical gap in medical knowledge puts many at risk.

On February 22, World Encephalitis Day, Encephalitis International renews its commitment to raising awareness and recognition of the symptoms of encephalitis among both the public and the healthcare professionals.

Encephalitis International is committed to working towards providing health and medical professionals with globally accessible training and will continue to collaborate with international stakeholders, such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), to make Encephalitis a global priority.

Encephalitis affects one person every minute globally and has a higher incidence rate than Motor Neuron Disease (MND) and Multiple Sclerosis (MS) combined. Yet, 80 per cent of the people are unaware of it.

Dr Ava Easton, Chief Executive of Encephalitis International said, "In the wake of these alarming survey findings, it is clear that much more must be done to bridge the gap in encephalitis awareness and expertise."

"Encephalitis International is determined to increase this awareness among medical professionals through the development of globally accessible training programmes which will provide the tools for them to better recognise and treat Encephalitis. Of course, we cannot do this alone and will continue to work alongside international entities, such as the World Health Organisation, to elevate encephalitis as a global health priority, " Dr Ava Easton concludes.