

Overview of Adult Congenital Heart Disease and Maintenance of Optimal Function in Adult Congenital Heart Disease

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The prevalence of congenital heart disease (CHD) is approximately 8 cases per 1,000 live births. Paediatric care for patients with congenital heart disease, over the past 25 years, has been so outstanding that as many as 85% of these children now survive into adulthood. Given these successes, there is a “new group of patients”. The number of adults with congenital heart disease is likely to exceed paediatric patients with CHD by 2020.

About 55% of adults suffering from ACHD are considered to be at medium or high risk for complications, re-operations, premature / sudden cardiac deaths or arrhythmias . ACHD is also the major cause of morbidity and mortality from heart disease in pregnancy and 20% of deaths are potentially avoidable.

The majority of congenital heart disease patients are in the age group 30-40 and are otherwise economically active. This number will increase with time due to improvements in health care technology, better operative surgical techniques and neonatal care; allowing more of these individuals to survive to adulthood. Currently, these patients are being cared for by paediatric doctors or adult cardiologists who may not be well equipped to deal with the complex problems like pregnancy, arrhythmias , pulmonary hypertension and coronary artery disease, thus a need for new strategies of care. This includes multidisciplinary teams equipped with skill sets for exercise testing, psychosocial support , imaging , electrophysiological testing , pulmonary hypertension and pregnancy support. Continued education of patients with ACHD , use of medical passports , use of information technology to track high risk patients are all crucial pieces to ensure that patients have the highest quality of life and optimal functioning in their later years.