

Scalpel holds out hope for non-obese diabetics

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Vrajendra Singh, 52, delivers LPG cylinders to homes in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, for a living. He was extremely worried when the task started to become quite arduous. "I could barely walk a kilometer to deliver the cylinders," said Singh. A diabetic for 10 years, the conditions of his eyes and kidney were steadily deteriorating.

But his health and the quality of life have improved now, after he became the first person in Asia to undergo Ileal Interposition - a surgery that is believed to control diabetes. Singh claimed that he can now easily walk for more than two

kilometers a day. "My eyes have stopped watering and I have resumed work," Singh said.

Before the surgery he could not control his diabetes despite taking oral medication and insulin, he said. Since he was not obese, doctors advised him against bariatric surgery, which is being widely used these days to curb type-II diabetes.

Dr Ramen Goel, laparoscopy and bariatric surgeon at Bombay Hospital, convinced him to go for Ileal Interposition. The surgical technique is just six years old and was first tried in Goainia, Brazil.

Goel said the main benefit of the surgery is that it reduces the dependence on

Number crunching

30 million Indians suffer from diabetes.

Number is expected to rise to 70 million in the next 20 years.

Diabetes effect

Heart diseases, strokes and paralysis, kidney failures, loss of vision

medication. "Major advantages of the surgery is that GLP-1 (insulin) is secreted in response to food stimulus," he said. The surgery also increases the beta cell mass of the pancreas and also slows down

the emptying of stomach, he said.

Ileal Interposition involves removing a small portion of the small intestine and interposing it. "By doing so the whole length of the intestine is intact and the hormone secretion improves dramatically," Goel said.

The procedure is practised in two other centres — at Mt Sinai Medical Center in New York, besides in Goainia, Brazil.

"It took over six months to prepare the team and acquire necessary approvals from Indian Council of Medical Research for the surgery," Goel said. The procedure costs anywhere between Rs 2-3 lakh.

The surgery has already started showing results in Singh, just a month after it

was performed, Goel claimed. "Singh's blood pressure and diabetes are under control; his sugar levels are 100-110 while fasting and 120-150 after meals," he said.

However, the surgery is not recommended for every diabetic, simply because it has not been tried on a large number of patients and the doctors cannot gauge its effects on patients with different profiles, Goel said. "We are planning to try the procedure on 100 more patients from across the country and have a clinical database," said Goel. "Patients should be aged between 20 and 65 years and, only those patients who are unable to control sugar levels with insulin and other medications should opt for this surgery."