

சிகரம்- சிறுநீரகநோய் கண்டறிய இரத்தப்பரிசோதனை முகாம்

### **Kidney disease screening project in rural Tamilnadu (SIGARAM)**

Chronic Kidney Disease is a major health problem across the world. It is particularly common in patients with diabetes and high blood pressure. The physical, emotional, and financial costs of this epidemic are staggering. With close to 500,000 Americans requiring dialysis therapies or having a transplanted kidney, kidney disease is responsible for more than 5% of Medicare dollar spending in the US.

India is considered to be the Ground Zero of the global diabetes epidemic, with estimates that more than 20% of the adult population is affected with diabetes. The lack of awareness and access to healthcare play a key role in developing diabetes. Complications such as kidney failure and blindness from the diabetes are particularly common in rural India. Kidney disease can be detected by simple testing at an early stage and treated effectively. However, it remains without symptoms until fairly advanced.

Screening programs such as the KEEP (Kidney Early Evaluation Program) pioneered by the National Kidney Foundation in the US have been effective in the early diagnosis and prevention of complications from kidney disease. Although screening programs for kidney disease exist in India, they are few and far in between – considering that the population of India is roughly 4 times that of the US and the majority still live in rural areas.

SIGARAM (a Tamil acronym for the kidney disease screening program) is an earnest effort by the American Tamil community to screen for kidney disease in the rural parts of Tamilnadu. It will be done along the lines of other effective kidney disease screening programs – including a health risk questionnaire, screening for diabetes, measurement of blood pressure, basic urine and blood work, followed by a risk assessment from a trained medical provider. Patients with abnormalities in the screening tests will be given referral information to providers/facilities that are capable of treating them, and following them longitudinally to prevent progression of their kidney disease.

It is expected that the screening can be done at a fraction of the cost in the US. The typical KEEP screening in the US costs \$800/patient. In India, it is estimated that a similar screening can be replicated for \$5/patient. It would be one of the most cost-effective strategies to identify, diagnose and prevent the progression of kidney disease in communities that can least afford the burden of it. The project would go a long way in directly touching the lives of people who have the least, by benefiting them the most with good health and longevity.

The project will be piloted in February 2018 at Rajapalayam, Virudhunagar district with plans for expanding to other rural districts. It will be implemented by TNF in

partnership with our educational and health care partners in various parts of Tamil Nadu. TNF Connecticut Chapter will take the lead role in promoting the project in the U.S. Please donate generously to this worthy cause by clicking on the link below and choosing “Kidney Disease Screening” under “Projects you are donating to” section. Thank you for your generosity!

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