

Donate skin and save life; skin bank must in public hospitals

Mumbai, April 21: Pratima (name changed), who was brought to a municipal hospital here with 50 per cent burn injury in a dowry related case died after five days. But Ramakant who received around 75 per cent burns went back home from a burn dedicated centre after a month as he received skin grafting during the treatment period.

Pratima would have had a chance to live only if she had received skin donation from a skin bank or some volunteers just like Ramakant who had the opportunity to get skin donated by his relatives. "Skin is needed in major burns and other injuries where it helps to prevent infections, decreases pain and provides mechanical

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protection and thus helps faster healing and save life," said Dr Sunil Keswani, Plastic Surgeon and Director of the National Burn Centre (NBC) located at Airoli in Navi Mumbai.

Most of the burn cases are of women and children from poor families, he said and recommended that the public hospitals should equip themselves with the infrastructure to deal with burn injuries, including a skin bank and trained personnel. Keswani said patients die due

to infection when the skin barrier breaks during the injury due to fire.

"If the barrier or the new skin is provided from the patient skin, he or she could be saved. But when the victim has more than 80 per cent burn injury, the patient's skin (autograft) can not be used," he said. "In such cases, we have to obtain cadaver skin or a living donor and is called Homograft," Keswani said.

Keswani runs the NBC hospital (144 beds), which has 50 beds dedicated only for

patients with burn injury and a group of dedicated trained personnel. The burn centre also uses artificial skin 'Integra' for those who can afford it, he said. The NBC, largest dedicated burn centre in the country, also has a dialysis unit with two machines (which is mandatory as per the international regulatory norms) and a skin bank just like an eye bank.

Several NGOs are motivated to take up the cause in spreading the awareness of skin donation, he said. "We train people from various hospitals across the country for critical care of the patients with burns," he said. (PTI)