

## Press Release

For Immediate Publication

# **Bone Marrow Transplant: An Alternate Therapy for Multiple Sclerosis**

***Fortis Healthcare conducts BMT on 24-year-old to enable her to fight Multiple Sclerosis***

**New Delhi, April 20, 2017:** 24-year-old Kanika Juneja recently got another chance at life with help from the team at Fortis Healthcare. Kanika was suffering from a condition which made her dizzy and numb with loss of sensation in her right arm. Her condition gradually worsened over the next few weeks and she was admitted to AIIMS on October 8<sup>th</sup> 2014, where she was diagnosed with **Multiple Sclerosis**, an autoimmune disorder where the body's immune system starts attacking the protective sheet covering the nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord. The disease had manifested itself in the form several attacks and each one left behind a tell-tale sign of disability. This also illustrated that her condition was aggressive in nature and was progressively worsening.

To control this condition, Kanika had to get expensive steroid injections which would only lessen the inflammation but not cure her. After undergoing several rounds of costly treatments, her family approached **Dr Rahul Bhargava, Director, Clinical Hematology and Bone Marrow Transplant, FMRI**, having heard of the innovative methods of treatment his team had pioneered in the field of bone marrow transplants (BMT). She hoped with all her heart that a BMT surgery could be an answer to her condition.

Kanika is the sister of **Anmol Juneja**, the face of organ donation in India. Anmol Juneja, 21, had made headlines with the first organ donation in India in 2012 when his family decided to go for voluntary organ donation to save lives of 34, after he was declared brain dead. The Junejas had just about made peace with their irreparable loss and decided to move on with their life when grief struck the household yet again, now with Kanika being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS). **Kanika** shared, "I had just completed my college education when I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. I was lucky because I got diagnosed within a week of my symptoms so I was able to avail treatment options faster. I started the multiple sclerosis Facebook community with the aim of raising awareness about the disease and exploring different treatment options. The conventional steroid injections and immune therapy are extremely expensive and don't promise a cure. Therefore I decided to undergo a bone marrow transplant, through which there was a chance that some bodily functions might be restored. "

**Dr Rahul Bhargava said**, "The reason for multiple sclerosis remains an enigma. The clinical processes only help slow the progression of the disease and do not offer a sure shot cure. In an autologous

BMT procedure, the healthy stem cells from the patient are taken out and preserved. Chemotherapy is then administered to reset the body's immunity and then the stem cells are injected back to rescue the person from the side effects of chemotherapy. After the surgery, the patient is kept under isolation for a few months to ensure they do not contract any infection. Kanika is now on the road to recovery and will be a sterling example for numerous MS patients."

Kanika is now actively involved in raising awareness about MS amongst the community through social media.

"Fortis Healthcare has pioneered several complex surgeries in the last few years. In this case, we have proved that bone marrow transplant can be seen as a successful alternate treatment option for multiple sclerosis patients, giving them a fresh start at life. FMRI brings together a comprehensive and integrated clinical haematology and Bone Marrow Transplant Program comprising experts with several years of experience. They have recently conducted their 100<sup>th</sup> BMT," said **Dr. Simmardeep Singh Gill, Zonal Director, Fortis Memorial Research Institute.**

Currently there are 2.3 million people living with multiple sclerosis worldwide.<sup>[1]</sup> It is an autoimmune disease which has no known cause or cure. Occurring between the ages of 20 to 50, this is a condition wherein the auto immune system of the body begins to attack the nerves of the brain and spinal cord, damaging the tissue layer around the nerves which is known as the myelin. This results in the slowing down of the brains functions. There are four types of Multiple Sclerosis cases, the most common one is the Relapse–Remitting MS. The Primary Progressive MS is a condition which affects only 10 percent of the population and Progressive Relapsing MS is when the disease has progressed and worsened to an extent where there is no hope. The Secondary Progressive MS is where the symptoms worsen considerably over a period of time.

#### **About Fortis Healthcare Limited**

*Fortis Healthcare Limited is a leading integrated healthcare delivery service provider in India. The healthcare verticals of the company primarily comprise hospitals, diagnostics and day care specialty facilities. Currently, the company operates its healthcare delivery services in India, Dubai, Mauritius and Sri Lanka with 45 healthcare facilities (including projects under development), approximately 10,000 potential beds and over 346 diagnostic centres.*

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