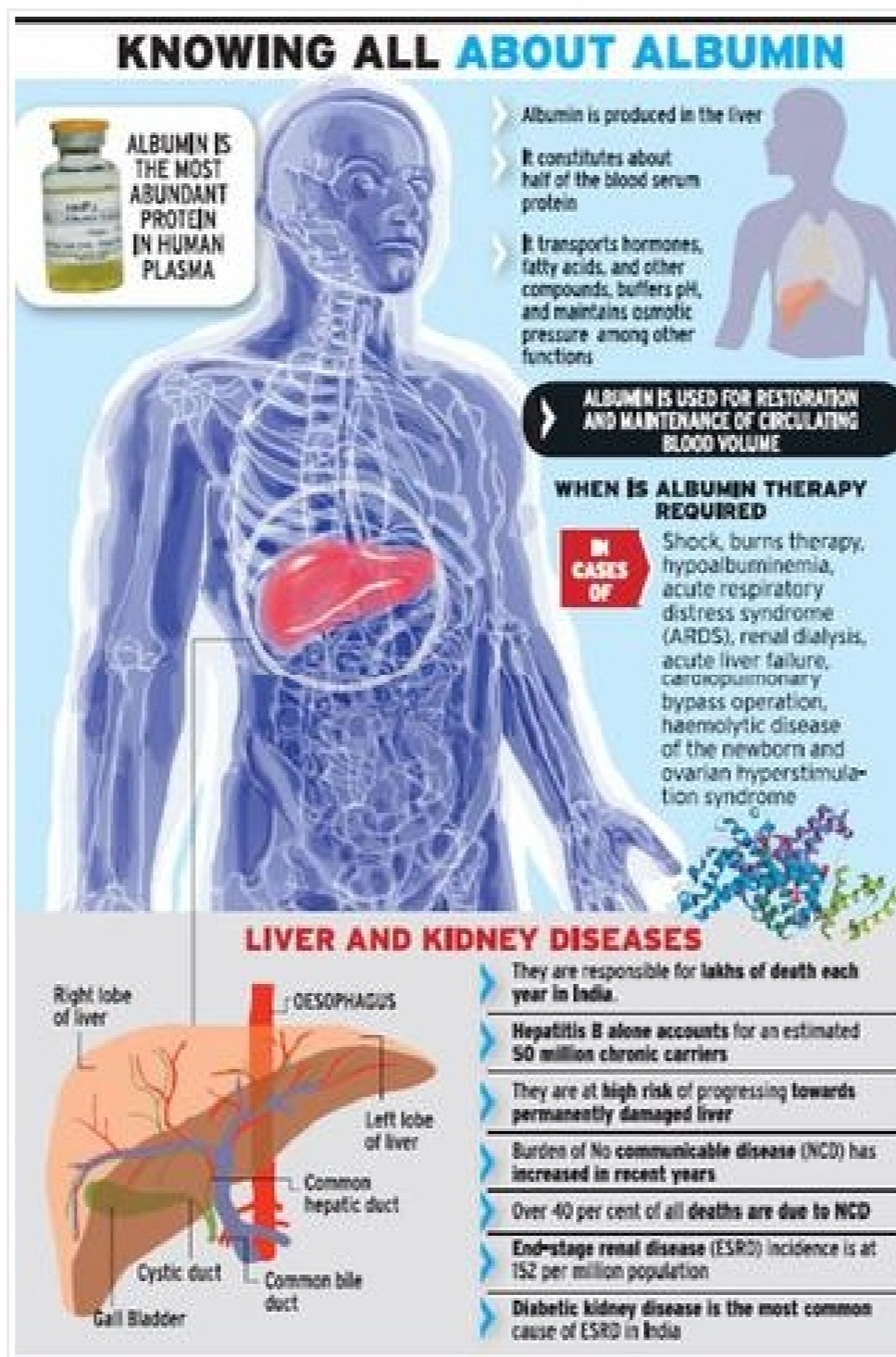


Life saving protein in short supply in Delhi



KNOWING ALL ABOUT ALBUMIN

ALBUMIN IS THE MOST ABUNDANT PROTEIN IN HUMAN PLASMA

- Albumin is produced in the liver
- It constitutes about half of the blood serum protein
- It transports hormones, fatty acids, and other compounds, buffers pH, and maintains osmotic pressure among other functions

ALBUMIN IS USED FOR RESTORATION AND MAINTENANCE OF CIRCULATING BLOOD VOLUME

WHEN IS ALBUMIN THERAPY REQUIRED

IN CASES OF

- Shock, burns therapy, hypoalbuminemia, acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), renal dialysis, acute liver failure, cardiopulmonary bypass operation, haemolytic disease of the newborn and ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome

LIVER AND KIDNEY DISEASES

- They are responsible for lakhs of deaths each year in India.
- Hepatitis B alone accounts for an estimated 50 million chronic carriers
- They are at high risk of progressing towards permanently damaged liver
- Burden of Non-communicable disease (NCD) has increased in recent years
- Over 40 per cent of all deaths are due to NCD
- End-stage renal disease (ESRD) incidence is at 152 per million population
- Diabetic kidney disease is the most common cause of ESRD in India

Liver patients are worst hit as drug goes missing from chemists

Harassed patients, helpless chemists and worried doctors have appealed to Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan to look into the acute shortage of life saving essential drug Human Serum Albumin (HSA) in the Capital.

Chemists claim that HAS – a protein – has gone missing from chemist stores for the past two months.

The worst hit are patients who have liver disease and are trying to buy this drug from the open market.

“Currently only hospitals – which have indented the drug – have supply of the drug. The shortage is also being felt in Mumbai and Pune and patients have been struggling for over three months now. We have at least 5-10 enquiries from families of patients who need to procure the drug. They have been running from pillar to post to procure the drug without any success,” said a representative from Chawla Chemists store, Yusuf Sarai.

Agreeing that doctors who aren’t attached to large hospitals have been complaining about the shortage of HAS, Dr. Saumitra Rawat, chairman Surgical Gastroenterology and Liver Transplant,

Sir Ganga Ram said: “We are hearing about a shortage. Large hospitals cater only to their patients so those out of this gambit are left to fend for themselves.”

He added that this protein is essential to maintain levels of calcium in the body and transports nutrients or drugs effectively in the blood stream.

Stating that the protein is essential for those suffering from liver disease and kidney failure, Dr. Samiran Nundy of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital said: “The government should ensure that there is no shortage of this life saving drug. The government cannot play with people’s lives.”

He added: “For patients affected by liver disease, kidney failure, burns and malnourishment this is an essential drug. It is also used after major surgery of kidney or liver transplant where the body is unable to produce adequate albumin. Transfusion of human albumin is required in process of healing or to reduce water retention and swelling conditions caused in the body due to an infection or a disease.”

Speculating that the shortage could have been triggered because of the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority’s (NPPA) – now reversed order – of bringing this drug under price control, Kailash Gupta, president, All India Chemist and Distributors Federation said: “We feel that the companies selling this drug have got together to create a shortage. There is no other reason for a sudden shortage. In fact private independent chemists claim that they have run-out of stocks.”

“Also albumin available in private hospitals is priced much higher than that what is available in the market and often patients to cut cost will want to buy from the open market,” said Mr. Gupta adding “sadly that is not possible now”.

Three companies – Reliance, Baxter and Biotics – are supplying to Delhi noted Dr. Subash Gupta, a pioneer of liver transplantation working with Apollo Hospital, Delhi.

“Reliance makes albumin while Baxter and Biotics are importing the drug. Though we (the Hospital) are not personally facing a shortage I know that it is not available with the private chemists.” The pharma companies did not respond to queries on the issue.

THE HINDU

Publication : The Hindu
 Date : October 4, 2014
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 Title : Life saving protein in short supply in Delhi