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CITY 5

Most cardiac arrest victims may not have history of heart ailment

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Mumbai: Sridevi's death reportedly due to sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) has once again put the spotlight on the lethal heart condition that is worryingly on the rise even among the young. Her brother-in-law Sunny Kapoor's statement to the media that the diva never had a history of heart ailment is true for a significant majority of victims.

SCA is the abrupt, unexpected and many-a-times unexplained loss of heart function, leading to breathlessness and unconsciousness. It results from an electrical malfunction in the heart, compromising the heart's pumping action and stopping blood flow to vital organs. Studies project the annual incidence of SCA in India at 0.7 million. Yet measures to address this emerging public health emergency hardly exist. It has a high fatality rate if not treated in minutes.

Cardiac arrest may be reversed if cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is performed and a defibrillator used to shock the heart and restore normal rhythm in minutes. But in India, most people don't know about symptoms or how to give a CPR. A 2014 article stated that 96% of those who

SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST

SCA is a medical emergency where the heart stops functioning abruptly with little or no warning

Occurrence | When the heart's internal electrical system that controls the rhythm of heartbeats malfunctions, causing arrhythmia

- > During arrhythmia, the heart can beat too fast, too slow, or stop beating completely
- > It disrupts the heart's function of pumping blood to the brain, lungs and other organs
- > Within seconds, the person loses consciousness, breathing ability and pulse
- > Death can occur in minutes if the person does not receive prompt treatment
- > It can occur in individuals without any history of heart disease

CAUSES OF SCA

- > The main causes include coronary artery disease, inherited disorders, and physical stress
- > Sometimes, there is no known cause

PHOTO Sridevi's fans outside her residence at Lokhandwala Complex on Sunday

the incidence of SCA is three times less than in men. "The risk for women increases 3-4 years after they reach menopause," the doctor said.

Dr Sallu Shirodkar, cardiologist, Nanavati Super Speciality Hospital, reiterated that women have their first presentation of coronary artery disease (CAD) about 10 years later than men. "Their mortality increases with age; 60% of women die suddenly from CAD since it has no prior warning symptoms," he said.

What is further worrying for India is the increasing incidence of SCA in recent years, particularly in cities, due to the high prevalence of CAD, diabetes and hypertension. Cardiologist Dr Brahm Pinto said, "SCA is because of stress, pollution, smoking, uncontrolled diabetes, obesity etc. Often in women, SCA is the first episode of a cardiac condition."

Dr Prafulla Kerkar, head, interventional cardiology, KEM Hospital, said the overwhelming number of SCA deaths also highlight the importance of the golden hour.