

The Kite of Joy and the Plight of a Boy: When Celebration Ends up in Amputation!

A 12-year old boy went out on the “*Makara Sankranti*” day this January to take part in the kite flying celebration along with his friends. His kite went quite high but unfortunately for him it got entangled with another kite and broke off. The kite along with a bit of thread got stuck in an electrical cable that was passing between the poles next to a building under construction. The boy reached the balcony of this under-construction building to take out his dream kite for which he had spent money and time. When he could not reach the kite, he went for it with an outstretched right hand with left leg touching the ground. Little did he realize that he was going to touch a live wire! In a fraction of a second – his right forearm was charred beyond recognition and he sustained severe burns over the left leg. The boy was taken to a nearby hospital and later shifted to our center for management by reconstructive surgeon. There was no option than to carry out a below-elbow amputation of right forearm.

Loosing life and limb due to accidents and injury is not rare and we read about such incidents almost daily. Despite such occurrences, hardly any awareness and preventive strategies are adopted. Foreign body ingestion and accidental poisonings are day-to-day problems. Drowning in the swimming pool even with lifeguards around is not uncommon. A small child falling into a ditch or open bore well and massive rescue operations that follow are the juicy news items for the media! Is it not our responsibility

to ensure the safety and well being of our own children and those around us? As service providers for the children and adolescents, are we, the pediatricians, loosing out on the opportunities to educate the parents? The physical burn and scar of this boy are healing well. With the current modern care, his disability would be reduced to bare minimum. Father’s tearful repentance that at least one person could have prevented his child from the disaster is a grim reminder of our responsibility.

We firmly feel that the Indian Academy of Pediatrics should take up a fresh campaign on injury and accident prevention in children and adolescents. That campaign should sensitize every parent to identify the imminent danger in his or her surroundings and take appropriate remedial action. Every clinic and OPD service should display few examples of accidental injuries and how these could have been averted. At all levels, pediatricians should organize workshops with involvement of parents. Pooled suggestions and educational material received from the members should be compiled and published for distribution to all those who care for our children and adolescents. We have now kept a photograph of this child on our consultation table (with permission of the father, identity concealed) and almost every parent before leaving asks us about this picture. We take that opportunity to sensitize and educate them. We would feel happy even if one limb or life is saved during the rest of our professional life!

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