

TACKLING AUTISM

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THERE is hope for the city's Autistics. The Pune Support Group for Autistics (PSGA) and the Indian Academy of Paediatricians (IAP), Pune chapter, have decided to meet every third Sunday of each month to discuss ways and means to handle the disorder better.

This was disclosed at the start of a three-day workshop on Autism organised by the PSGA, which got under way at the Bal Kalyan Sanstha on Ganeshkhind road on Friday morning.

Speaking to *Pune Times*, Dr Vasant Dhamal, president of IAP agreed that many paediatricians and general physicians knew very little about the disorder and that there was a need to interact with parents to understand the disorder

better. "Our monthly meetings are a step in the right direction," Dr Dhamal said.

How crucial this doctor-parent interaction will be was evident when Dr Charudatta Apte, ace neurosurgeon and chief guest at the function, openly acknowledged the fact that even he did not know anything about Autism until he was invited for the function.

Autism is a lifelong neurological disability, affecting the social and communicative skills of a person. Children with autism often have problems processing information from their five senses, which with their inhibited imagination, imitation and empathising abilities, leads to problems in learning appropriate social behaviour.

The three-day workshop is being conducted by noted Delhi-based activist Merry Barua, head

of Action for Autism, a non-governmental organisation. It is being attended by parents of Autistic children, therapists and doctors.

Barua stressed the need for paediatricians and general physicians to diagnose the disorder quickly, so that appropriate therapy could be resorted to.

Sunday, March 3, will see the IAP and the PSGA hold an exclusive meeting with Barua at the Poonam hotel at 9 am to discuss the role of doctors in treating this disorder.

The PSGA meets every third Sunday at 6.30 pm at the Holistic Diagnostic Centre, Eden Hall, Model Colony. For more details one can contact Anuja Joshi on: 543 1623 and Anjali Kherdekar on: 543 0674.

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