

Docs perform rare eye surgery on 2-month-old

AGE CORRESPONDENT
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Cataract, an eye ailment is always associated with old age. But the case of two-month-old Ethan from Ethiopia is unusual. According to published international research papers, in about 0.4 per cent of all births, congenital cataracts are found or soon develop.

Ethan's father Muktar Omar travelled all the way to Mumbai when he learnt that his son suffers from bilateral congenital cataract and had no vision. "We were unable to find doctors in Ethiopia who could perform the surgery under anaesthesia on a small baby," said Omar, who had stayed in Mumbai a few years ago. "I checked online and found that this operation could be easily done here," he said.

Dr Himanshu Mehta, consultant ophthalmologist at Lilavati Hospital, who performed the surgery on Ethan, said that it is unusual to conduct cataract surgery on small children. "There were no complications during the surgery. However, we had to perform the surgery under anaesthesia, which is a little difficult on a two-month-old. We do not generally get patients this young."



Ethan from Ethiopia after his surgery

— ASIAN AGE

However, doctors remain divided on the issue of rarity of the case. Dr Ragini Parekh, head of ophthalmology at JJ Hospital, said that she has dealt with a lot of cataract cases in children. "We keep getting cases of children with cataract. A child may suffer from congenital cataract because of maternal diabetes, malnutrition, endocrine problems or infection in the mother," she said, adding that administering general anaesthesia and performing a surgery in both the eyes in one go is indeed a problem, as the child may be rendered blind in the other eye.

However, Ethan's parents are happy. "Doctors say

that he will be able to see now once his bandages are removed. We only want our child to be normal and see the world," said Omar, who is set to fly to Ethiopia next Friday.

Although Ethan's cataract has been removed, but to have a normal vision sans complication will take some time. A senior ophthalmologist said, "Surgeries on such young patients require highly specialised skills. Only a paediatric ophthalmology surgeon does it. In this case only the cataract has been removed as of now. There will be a follow up and after around two years, the baby will be examined again for lenses and glasses."