Powering public health with genetics

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By Kalyani Sharma

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NHS explains that genetic testing, sometimes called genomic testing finds changes in genes that can cause health problems. It's mainly used to diagnose rare and inherited health conditions and some cancers.

Genetic testing can play an important role in managing the rising burden of various diseases like diabetes, certain types of cancer and others by eliminating the need for unnecessary checkups and screening tests and directing the person towards the best available options for prevention, treatment and monitoring the condition.

Is it possible to incorporate genetic testing in public health settings?

The affordability and accessibility of genetic testing is a big issue. However, with the overall rise in healthcare cost and decline in quality of life, preventive healthcare needs more focus and genome testing has the potential to nip several healthcare challenges in the bud.

Answering this, **Amol Naikawadi, Joint Managing Director, Indus Health Plus** said, "Yes, incorporating genome testing in public health settings in India is indeed possible and can have several potential benefits. Preventive genetic testing has the potential to revolutionise healthcare in India by enabling early detection and intervention for various health conditions with genetic component like diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, PCOS, and thyroid. Genetic counseling and education programs can be integrated into public health settings to provide individuals with information about their genetic risks and help them understand the implications of genetic testing, and guide them in making informed decisions about preventive measures. These programs can be implemented in various settings, such as primary care clinics, community health centers, and public health campaigns, to increase awareness, knowledge, and utilisation of genetic testing for preventive purposes."