

NO MORE HEARTACHE

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what doctors admit would have been fatal had he not undergone this operation. Shorn of medical terminologies, the most important valve in his heart was malfunctioning. His left aortic valve (which pumps in fresh blood into the body and heart) was pumping only a miniscule part of the required amount.

With the Ross Procedure operation Dr Bhan says he replaced the diseased aortic valve with Adnan's own pulmonary valve, which facilitates movement of impure blood from heart to the lungs. This valve, Dr Bhan says, would grow along with Adnan, and fit his heart proportion.

The result is something that even the good doctor surely couldn't have anticipated: Adnan is now desperately waiting for April, when he can go back to the Valley and join the school cricket team.

"The doctor has promised that I can bat like my brother, Zeeshan, and other friends at school without feeling any pain in my chest. I won't get exhausted quickly any more," says Adnan, who lives in Zaina Kadal, near Srinagar.

"His frail frame is full of life again after a long time," says his father, Manzoor Ahmed, as Adnan chirps away with the hospital attendants at Max Devki Devi Heart and Vascular Institute in Saket.

A WEEK THAT CHANGED A NINE-YEAR-OLD LIFE

But the picture was gloom personified as recently as January 31 when this father-son duo arrived at the emergency ward of Max Hospital at 1.30 am. "Adnan was in severe pain," Manzoor says, "he was out of breath

MORE ON ROSS PROCEDURE

"Ross Procedure" was pioneered by English surgeon Dr Donald Ross in the 1980s but went out of favour as it requires intricate skills. In fact, even in the West it is performed at very selected hospitals/medical centres. Research shows the survival rate has been almost 90 per cent among patients who were operated 20 years ago using this procedure.

DR ANIL BHAN (R) is one of just two doctors in north India who are trained to perform this surgery. Two other private hospitals in Bangalore and Chennai offer this facility.



and convulsing with acute chest pain.

Adnan went for an echocardiogram the next morning (Feb. 1) and met Dr Anil Bhan, the director of cardiac-surgical programme at Max.

This wasn't their first encounter, though. Dr Bhan had earlier operated on Adnan in 2003 at AIIMS.

"He was six then," Manzoor says. "One afternoon he suddenly experienced severe pain in his left chest." And that was the first time his family got the indication that all wasn't well with young Adnan. "We rushed him to Sher-e-Kashmir Medical Institute (in Srinagar)."

A check-up later the doctors there admitted their helplessness and advised Manzoor to "rush him to AIIMS. They said that's the only place

where doctors can help cure Adnan's cardiac condition."

The 37-year-old bakery owner took the next flight to Delhi.

At AIIMS, Adnan was diagnosed with Aortic Stenosis, a condition in which the crucial aortic valve grows narrower. Dr Bhan had then performed Aortic Valve Balloon Dilation operation on him, Manzoor says.

But Adnan's valve thickened and calcified in the next two years and he was back at AIIMS on January 31 this year.

Dr Bhan says patients with Adnan's condition are provided with metallic valves, which slowly replace the original aortic valve. "But these valves available in the market are 17mm in length, whereas Adnan's body condition required a 15mm metallic valve."

The doctor says Adnan would have outgrown the valve in five years flat. So he suggested the Ross Procedure. The rest is a story, not just medical history. Of science. Of hope. And of faith.

"Earlier, my knees grew weak even if I took a few steps," Adnan says, "but now I walk with Dad around the hospital premises and don't feel breathless."

