

Newborns Too Should be Screened for Genetic Disorders, Says Expert

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DUBAI - In view of the high prevalence of genetic diseases in the country, screening of not only would-be couples but also newborns would become necessary, according to a genome expert.

A national panel would have to be set up for this, Dr Mahmoud Taleb Al Ali, Director of the Dubai-based Centre for Arab Genomic Studies, said at the 5th Dubai International Conference for Medical Sciences on Tuesday.

The country currently has a national pre-marital screening programme for nationals and expatriates that offers screening for disorders such as Thalassaemia and Sickle Cell anaemia as well as general health.

"In about six to seven years, there might be another panel added to the existing programme," he said without giving further details.

He also said genetic research in the UAE is heading in the right direction. "We have the Dubai Healthcare City, Academic City as well as other bodies, so the future is bright for research in the country," he added.

"Prevalence of genetic diseases is very high in the UAE compared to the rest of the world, so it is a major concern. It also puts a lot of burden on the government financially. We need to prepare strategies with a special focus on genetics," he said. He, however, did not give details of the amount of money being spent on research.

At present, there are over 250 types of genetic disorders in the country.

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