

Now, doctor makes film on epilepsy

Madhavi Rajadhyaksha | TNN

Mumbai: Small-time actor and Goregaon resident Krishna Bansal's eyes light up with enthusiasm when he talks about his next film—'Asha-The Hope'. A short movie dedicated to epilepsy and its caregivers, it's not a big banner production which he could show off in his portfolio, although he thinks no film has told his story better.

Bansal, who learnt that his wife was suffering from epilepsy on the second day of his marriage, is only one of the characters in the film. The 60-minute film which will be screened at Y B Chavan Auditorium on the occasion of World Epilepsy Day on Saturday is the brainchild of neurologist Nirmal Surya.

A message of hope runs through it even as it poignantly touches upon people whose lives are turned upside down by a epilepsy diagnosis. They include a newly-wed couple, a villager who gets enmeshed in rituals and the parents of a teenager who is trying to hide the problem. For the 1% of the population who live with it, the movie does offer tips on coping with the disorder on a daily basis.

"Onlookers need to realise that an epileptic seizure usually passes over within a few minutes. Since the patient



FOR A NOBLE CAUSE: A scene from the film *Asha-The Hope*

WHAT CAN YOU DO IF SOMEONE IS HAVING A SEIZURE?

- Remove sharp or hot objects around the patient, which may hurt him/her
- Don't crowd the patient
- Gently turn the patient to the

side so that his saliva flows out and does not choke him

- Don't try restraining his/her jerking hands and legs as it could cause fractures
- Don't force patients to eat or drink anything during a seizure

doesn't know what's happening, the role of the witness is important," says Dr Surya, who is attached to the civic-run Nair Hospital. Do not crowd patients during seizures, promptly remove sharp or hot objects around them, and keep their airways free.

In a field where scientific jargon and statistics usually leave patients confused, doctors feel the film can provide a healing touch. "Every third patient of mine says they were given onions or chap-pals to smell during a seizure.

Such initiatives will help dispel misconceptions as well as fight the stigma," says head of neurology at KEM Hospital, Dr Sangeeta Ravat who has volunteered in the film.

As filmmakers put it: patients and their relatives are the best ambassadors. Bansal's tale certainly reiterates this. He now makes it a point to urge patients suffering from seizures to seek a doctor's help besides supporting his wife. "I don't let her miss a single dose of medication," he says proudly.

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