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Angioplasty may have been a better option, say some cardiologists

Risha Chittlangla | TNN

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is scheduled for a repeat cardiac bypass surgery at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on Saturday morning but it was after much deliberation that the team of doctors attending to him decided — in consultation with Singh's family — to go in for the bypass. Some cardiologists feel that angioplasty is the preferred mode of treatment for patients with history of previous bypass surgeon.

\*In bypass patients, angioplasty is a preferred mode of treating blockages which occur. The risk involved in angioplasty is less as compared to bypass sur-

HEALTH CHECK

- Singh, now 76, underwent a bypass in UK in 1990
- In 2004, before becoming PM, he had angioplasty in which stents are introduced to prop open arteries
- Angioplasty involves inserting metal rings to widen clogged area while bypass uses a piece of vein or artery from leg or arm to create a detour
- Recovery period: at least 5-10 days in angioplasty, 10-30 days in bypass. But the beating heart technique being used for this operation could speed recovery

gery. And it has been seen that in 90% cases there is no reoccurrence of blockages for a good number of years. We have done many cases of stenting in bypass patients," said Dr Praveen Chandra, director interventional cardiologist, Max De- vki Devi Heart and Vascular Institute.

Eighteen years after the bypass sur- gery, 76-year-old Singh underwent an angioplasty at the Escorts Heart Institute in 2004 to clear the blockage in one of the left arteries.

"He had blockage in left anterior de- scending artery. We had used a drug elut- ing stent to clear the blockage. To clear blockages in the heart, especially that of a patient who has undergone a bypass, angioplasty is a preferred line of treat-

ment," said a senior cardiologist at the Escorts Heart Institute on condition of anonymity.

He pointed out that "Both bypass and angioplasty can provide a solution to the existing blockage. But whether a patient should undergo a repeat bypass or an angioplasty is dependent on various factors like patients age, existing diseases etc."

According to sources in AIIMS, an- gioplasty was also considered as an op- tion in Singh's case. Seconding the de- cision taken by team of doctors looking after Singh, Dr Pushum Lal, chief in- terventional cardiologist at Metro Heart Institute said, "Dr Singh underwent the bypass 18 years back and the grafts by now would have aged. Angioplasty is def-

initely a preferred option that is why Dr Singh underwent this procedure in 2004. But now the aged graft needs to be re- placed. The team of doctors would have weighed the pros and cons."

A study on percutaneous coronary in- tervention (angioplasty) versus repeat bypass surgery published in the Journal of American College of Cardiology in 2002 shows that the former is preferable to repeat bypass. In the study it was found that the number of patients who opted for angioplasty was double that of those who preferred a repeat bypass. In fact, in physician-directed registry, 155 patients were assigned to re-operation and 357 to angioplasty. The 36-month survivals were 71% in repeat bypass and 77% in PCI.

"It (bypass) is a painful process and like all surgeries there is risk involved. In aged patients the recovery is slow and they a lot of precaution needs to be taken. I haven't see PM's reports, so I can't really comment on it. But angio- plasty can provide an effective solution to blockages in patients with history of bypass. Angioplasty is safer to perform on bypass patients," said Dr SK Gupta, senior consultant cardiologist, In- draprastha Apollo.

But patients with multiple blockages or long blockages are ideal candidates for bypass. "Those with multiple blockages should be considered for a bypass as it is complicated to do multiple angioplasts in bypass patients," said DrChandra.