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Mobile app to identify domestic violence

Bangalore, Dec 2, 2013, DHNS:



A new mobile application will identify clinical signs of domestic violence in victims. The app will be launched by the Soukhya project which is working to tackle the problem for the past three years.

Soukhya which was jointly implemented by Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike's Health department in collaboration with St John's Research Institute, Research Triangle Institute and Dimagi Inc., is already working on the initial implementation of the application.

The application, called 'Commcare' has been developed by a company named Dimagi based in Boston and is active so far in the east, west and south zones of Bangalore.

There are eight centres, namely Wilson Garden, Shanthinagar, Siddaiah Road, Kodihalli, Bapujinagar, Mudalapalya, Avalahalli and Indian Red Cross Society Road with nine users for the application. The application allows a nurse or a doctor to register a woman who shows symptoms of domestic violence, screen her for causes and once screened, make the adequate referrals. Once a case is identified, a message is sent to the centres which then help the victim deal with the problem directly or indirectly.

Promote well-being

"The Soukhya project aims at promoting health and well being among the women living in low income areas of the City. In a research conducted, we found out that 80 per cent of 750 young women aged between 16 and 25 had experienced domestic violence," said Dr Suneeta Krishnan, who heads Soukhya and is Senior Epidemiologist and Adjunct Professor at St John's Research Institute.

In the six months when the application was used, about 400 women were screened for domestic violence. "Out of this, 60 women were identified as those who require counselling. Two of them even went to the extent of taking legal steps against those inflicting violence on them," Suneeta added. Soukhya is a network of 23 organisations providing support services like shelter, counselling and legal aid for women.

The US Consul General in Chennai, Jennifer McIntyre, who visited Wilson Garden Maternity Hospital here on Monday, said: "The situation here and back in the United States are very similar. One in three women around the world will experience some form of gender-based violence in her lifetime and in some countries that number is as high as 70 per cent. This application will provide a more comprehensive, accurate and timely data collection on domestic violence screening, counselling and referral services."

"My colleagues at the US Agency for International Development announced a USD 500,000 grant for the implementation of the Soukhya project," Jennifer added. A part of the grant will go to Dimagi in developing the technology further.

"It is majorly for women who do not have access to education and information. More often than not, it takes time for them to open up to someone. This project allows the much needed privacy and confidentiality required in dealing with such sensitive cases," said Suneeta added.

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