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RS Polyclinic

Children who defied the odds of premature birth reunite at Rainbow Children's Hospital, Chennai



CHENNAI – 18 Nov, 2026 Rainbow Children's Hospital, India's leading pediatric multi-specialty and perinatal care hospital chains, today organized a press conference in Chennai to highlight advancements in neonatal care and the hospital's experience in managing complex preterm deliveries, delivered at the limits of viability, which has been defined in India as 24 – 25 weeks. The session brought together the hospital's team of neonatologists, who shared details of many challenging cases involving extremely premature babies who overcame multiple critical complications with specialized medical interventions and intensive neonatal care. The discussion also highlighted the increasing need for advanced neonatal facilities, timely diagnosis and comprehensive medical support to improve outcomes for periviable premature babies.

The first highlighted case involved a baby girl born at 24 weeks and 3 days and weighing 712 grams. The baby required 12 minutes of CPR immediately after birth and subsequently battled severe respiratory complications, pulmonary haemorrhage, bleeding on both sides of the brain and a drug-resistant bloodstream infection. She also underwent laser treatment in both eyes for retinopathy of prematurity. After 105 days of oxygen support and intensive NICU care, she was discharged weighing 1.944 kg. The second case were babies, born as twins at 24 weeks and 2 days and weighing 600 grams, again battling complex respiratory concerns. They were also diagnosed with a significant patent ductus arteriosus (PDA), a condition in which a blood vessel near the heart remains open after birth. Despite two courses of medication, the vessel remained open, necessitating surgical closure with clips when were just four weeks old. They have now recovered well after nearly 75 days of hospital stay and are ready to go home.

Rainbow children's hospital reports survival of 68% at 24 weeks of gestational age and 86% at 25 weeks, which is on par with the outcome of these infants in high income countries. This niche care is offered only by selected units in India, again underlining the complexity of care required and the availability of expertise. These statistics should be seen in the context of the high preterm load in India. According to estimates published in The Lancet, India recorded approximately 3.02 million preterm births in 2020, accounting for 13% of all births in the country and over 20% of preterm births worldwide which is the highest number of preterm births globally. Previable babies are those born 26 weeks before gestation, are at the maximal higher risk of complications due to the underdevelopment of their lungs, brain, immune system and other vital organs. This makes access to specialized neonatal care and timely medical intervention critical to their survival and long-term development.

Speaking on the broader challenges and advancements in neonatal care, Dr. Giridhar S, Clinical Lead – Neonatology, Rainbow Children's Hospital, Guindy, said, "India accounts for the highest number of preterm births globally, making this an important public health concern. Care for periviable preterm infants is even more challenging considering the complexity of medical and surgical problems faced by these babies. At Rainbow Children's Hospital, we have created a tiny baby ecosystem combining specialized instruments, advanced monitoring, standardized clinical evidence-based protocols, and developmental supportive care. Our units are backed by a dedicated multidisciplinary team of specialists, including senior neonatologists and nurses, backed by round-the-clock availability of surgeons, cardiologists and radiologists with special expertise in handling these vulnerable babies. Parents must understand that a periviable birth does not necessarily mean an unfavorable outcome. With the right medical support, many of these babies can overcome critical challenges and progress towards healthy development."

Elaborating on common neonatal complications and the role of technology, Dr. Shobana Rajendran, Senior Consultant – Neonatologist, Rainbow Children's Hospital, Annanagar, said, "Extremely premature babies are vulnerable to complications such as respiratory distress, brain haemorrhages, infections, feeding difficulties and retinopathy of prematurity, as several vital organs are still developing. Advancements in neonatal ventilation, surfactant therapy, continuous monitoring and laser treatment for eye complications have significantly improved the management of these conditions. A multidisciplinary approach is equally important to address complications as they arise and support the baby's growth and development beyond the initial critical phase."

Highlighting maternal health and the importance of preventing premature births, Dr. Monisha R, Consultant – Neonatologist, Rainbow Children's Hospital, Sholinganallur, said, "Preterm births can be associated with several factors, including multiple pregnancies, maternal hypertension, diabetes, infections, cervical insufficiency and placental complications. While not all premature births can be prevented, regular antenatal check-ups, timely screening and appropriate management of underlying maternal conditions can help identify and address certain risks. High-risk pregnancies require closer medical supervision and early consultation with specialists to plan for potential complications. Awareness and timely intervention are key to ensuring that mothers and babies receive appropriate care."

The hospital highlighted that managing previable premature babies requires comprehensive care, from antenatal counselling and delivery planning to specialized NICU interventions, nutritional support and long-term developmental monitoring. This calls for advanced neonatal infrastructure and coordinated expertise across specialties to address the evolving needs of these newborns.