

VADODARA/ANAND: A 42-year-old patient who was attending a screening camp at Bamangaam Primary Health Centre (PHC) in Anklav taluka in Anand district had no idea that he was suffering from chest pain and breathlessness due to a life-threatening heart attack. The patient was immediately rushed for cardiac treatment at GMERS Medical College and Hospital at Gotri in Vadodara.

Patients like him are getting much needed help through a project — CardioGram — that aims at improving cardiovascular healthcare delivery at rural PHCs across the country. A group of young interns and junior doctors have started the pilot project in Anand which will be showcased as a model district before it is scaled up to state and national level where each PHC is equipped with digital electrocardiogram (ECG) machines.

After installing the first digital ECG machine at Bamangaam PHC in Anklav taluka, the group is set to equip three other PHCs in Anand and two in New Delhi with digital ECG machines next month.

“Our target is to install 250 digital ECG machines in five states including Gujarat, Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka and Assam within the next six months,” said Dr Priyansh Shah, founder and president of World Youth Heart Federation (WYHF) — a youth led non-profit social enterprise that has launched the project.

“After establishing the model district of Anand, we will expand to over 24,000 rural PHCs of the country. Gujarat itself has 1,500 rural PHCs which will be the next milestone,” he said.

Like Priyansh, Dr Adnan Vohra and Dr Nidhi Shah — all intern doctors at state-run SSG Hospital in Vadodara are volunteering for the project with a team comprising Dr Pankti Shah, Dr Harshraj Vaghela, Dr Priyal Thakkar, Dr Keshav Shah, Dr Smit Shah, Dr Devarsh Shah and Dr Dhrumil Patil.

Nationally, the group has 600 volunteers of interns and junior doctors in 58 cities. Initially, the group is using its own funds but plans to scale up the initiative with a hyper-local model involving local businessmen and community leaders.

WYHF has already trained healthcare workers at three PHCs and one community health centre in Anklav. “It was during the screening camp at Bamangaam during which we found that six patients out of 71 needed treatment at higher centres. Three of the six patients were asymptomatic. It was only because of the digital ECGs that the problem was identified,” Shah added.

Deployment of ECG machines at PHC will help in diagnosing many more such cases and in turn save thousands of lives, he said. Companies manufacturing digital ECG machines have their own mobile applications through which sending digital ECGs to cardiologists becomes easy.