Editorial

A Medical ID Can Save a Life

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Medical identification (often called a medical ID) refers to any item or system that provides important medical information about a person in case of an emergency. The main goal of a medical ID is to alert healthcare providers or first responders (such as paramedics and emergency physicians) to critical health information when a person is unable to communicate — for example, when the medical ID bearer is unconscious, in an altered mental state, very young, or otherwise unable to provide essential information.[1] Typically, a medical ID is a small emblem or tag worn on a bracelet, neck chain, or a paper card carried in a wallet or purse. Increasingly, digital medical IDs stored on smartphones or wearable devices bear information indicating that the wearer has a medical condition requiring immediate attention.

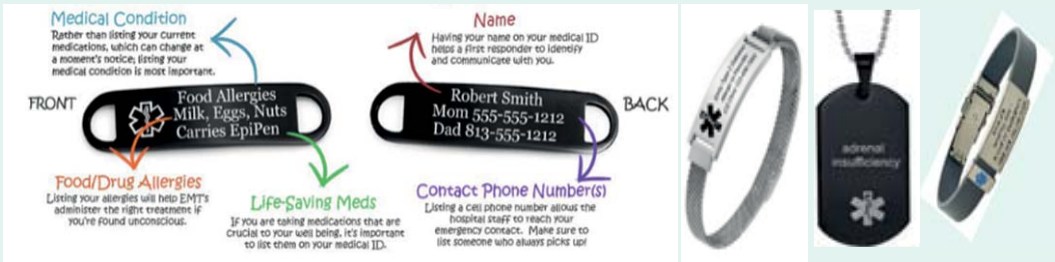
In 1954, prompted by Australian diabetes advocate Ruby Board, the Diabetic Association of New South Wales began issuing free identification cards for individuals with diabetes. This initiative followed a tragic incident in which a man with diabetes was mistakenly arrested for public drunkenness, fell into a diabetic coma, and subsequently died in police custody. The identification cards were introduced to help prevent such misunderstandings and ensure that people with diabetes received timely and appropriate medical care.[2]

In the United States, the use of medical identification jewellery was first documented in 1953 in Turlock, California, following a near-fatal anaphylactic reaction to a tetanus antitoxin experienced by a young girl. In response, her family established the MedicAlert Foundation® to promote the use of medical ID jewellery for individuals with serious medical conditions.[3] Early reports indicate that medical identification jewellery originated in the 1950s, primarily for children who had experienced anaphylactic reactions. These warning tags were designed to alert emergency personnel to allergies or sensitivities, ensuring prompt and appropriate management.[4]

Later, the utility of medical IDs for chronic conditions such as type 1 diabetes was recognised. A cross-sectional analysis found that the uptake of medical jewellery among young people with type 1 diabetes in Australia was extremely low (approximately 5%), despite the clear rationale that wearing a tag could assist in hypoglycaemic or ketoacidosis emergencies.[5] Gradually, medical ID tags came to include other chronic or emergency conditions such as:

- Adrenal insufficiency - Anaphylaxis (food, drug, or insect allergies) - Alzheimer's disease[6] - Anaemia[7] - Asplenia - Autism[8] - Rare blood groups - Dementia - Diabetes (Type 1) - Epilepsy - Haemophilia - Hypoglycaemia - Hypopituitarism - Seizure disorders - Von Willebrand disease, etc.

A typical medical ID includes: - Name and date of birth - Health information: medical conditions



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(e.g., diabetes, epilepsy); allergies (e.g., to drugs, foods, or insect stings); current medications; and optionally, blood group - Emergency contacts: names and phone numbers of individuals to be contacted in case of an emergency.

Medical IDs should be worn at all times. They may help prevent emergencies, reduce hospital visits, and facilitate faster diagnosis and treatment. Medical IDs can take various forms — wearable IDs, digital IDs, wallet cards, car window stickers, or even tattoos.

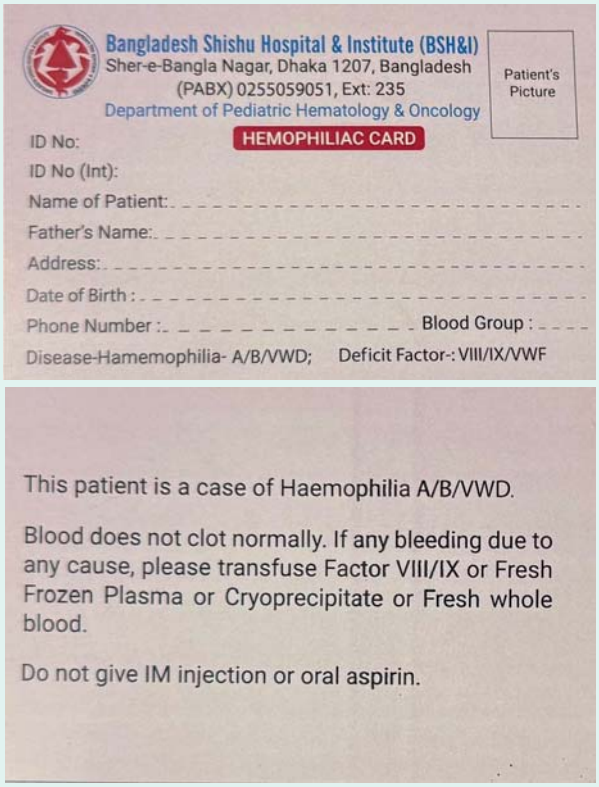
- Wearable IDs: bracelets, necklaces, or sports bands with a visible medical symbol are the most common. - Digital IDs: accessible from a smartphone's lock screen (e.g., iPhone Health app or Android equivalent). - Wallet cards: easy to carry and particularly useful for individuals who prefer not to wear jewellery.

A medical ID is a vital tool for individuals with conditions that may render them unresponsive, such as severe allergies, diabetes, epilepsy, or adrenal insufficiency. In the fast-paced environment of an emergency department—where every minute counts—such identification can make a crucial difference. Consider an unconscious patient unable to communicate that they are experiencing an adrenal crisis, are insulin-dependent, or have a life-threatening allergy. In these situations, a medical ID—whether a bracelet, necklace, wallet card, or smartphone-linked tag—acts as a silent but essential communicator of vital health information.

Equally important is the awareness and training of emergency healthcare providers to routinely check for medical IDs upon patient arrival. Prompt recognition of these identifiers enables clinicians to assess underlying conditions and initiate the most appropriate, potentially life-saving treatment without delay.

Medical identification systems have been routinely used in developed countries since the 1950s to alert healthcare professionals to critical medical conditions during emergencies. It is now time to adopt this important practice more widely in our own healthcare settings. Encouragingly, several institutions in Bangladesh have already initiated such efforts. For example, Bangladesh Shishu Hospital & Institute has been issuing wallet cards to patients with haemophilia since 2015. This ensures that, in the event of a road traffic accident or other medical emergency, healthcare personnel are immediately aware of the individual's bleeding disorder, enabling timely and appropriate management.

The broader implementation of medical IDs for other chronic and high-risk conditions could yield similar benefits. This is a simple, low-cost intervention with substantial potential impact—particularly in situations where patients are unconscious or unable to communicate. It is therefore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Patient's Picture

HEMOPHILIAC CARD

ID No:
ID No (Int):
Name of Patient:
Father's Name:
Address:
Date of Birth :
Phone Number : Blood Group :
Disease-Hamemophilia- A/B/VWD; Deficit Factor-: VIII/IX/VWF

This patient is a case of Haemophilia A/B/VWD.

Blood does not clot normally. If any bleeding due to any cause, please transfuse Factor VIII/IX or Fresh Frozen Plasma or Cryoprecipitate or Fresh whole blood.

Do not give IM injection or oral aspirin.

imperative that clinicians, health service leaders, policymakers, and patient advocacy groups collaborate to promote and standardise the use of medical IDs, integrating them into emergency response systems.

By doing so, we can reduce preventable delays, misdiagnoses, and medical errors—reminding us that, in critical moments, a small tag or bracelet can convey life-saving information more effectively than words.

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