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Indian MIT Professor breaks new ground: The Hindustan Times

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Massachusetts, Jan 17: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) says its young Indian American professor Ram Sasisekharan's basic research on complex sugars has led to a cascade of potential medical applications.

The findings of Sasisekharan's team could, for example, significantly improve outcomes for patients undergoing major operations such as heart bypass surgery and impact a multibillion-dollar drug industry, MIT emphasised.

Sasisekharan is reportedly excited and a bit awed by the applications that are resulting from his work. "It's very often easier said than done to translate an idea to reality," he said. "To see it happen is really a humbling experience."

In the latest issue of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, a team led by Sasisekharan reports the creation of designer drugs for preventing the blood clots that can cause strokes and heart disease during surgery.

The resulting drugs have major advantages over the conventional form they are based on, which has an annual market of \$2-3 billion, said MIT in its release.

Further, an additional drug based on Sasisekharan's work is presently in Phase III clinical trials for heart bypass patients.

For over 60 years doctors have used the drug heparin — the focus of the current research — during surgeries. Although safe, heparin and its smaller cousin, low molecular weight heparin, have shortcomings based on the fact that there's been no quick and easy way to determine the exact amounts of the active ingredients of the drugs.

"Simply put, low molecular weight heparins are essentially generated by chopping up heparin in a blender, which results in a mixture of large and small pieces with different amounts of active sites, or areas key to anticoagulation," said Sasisekharan, an associate professor in MIT's Biological Engineering Division.

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Bangalore	22c	32c
Chennai	26c	35c
Delhi	23c	38c
Kolkata	24c	33c
Mumbai	25c	35c

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