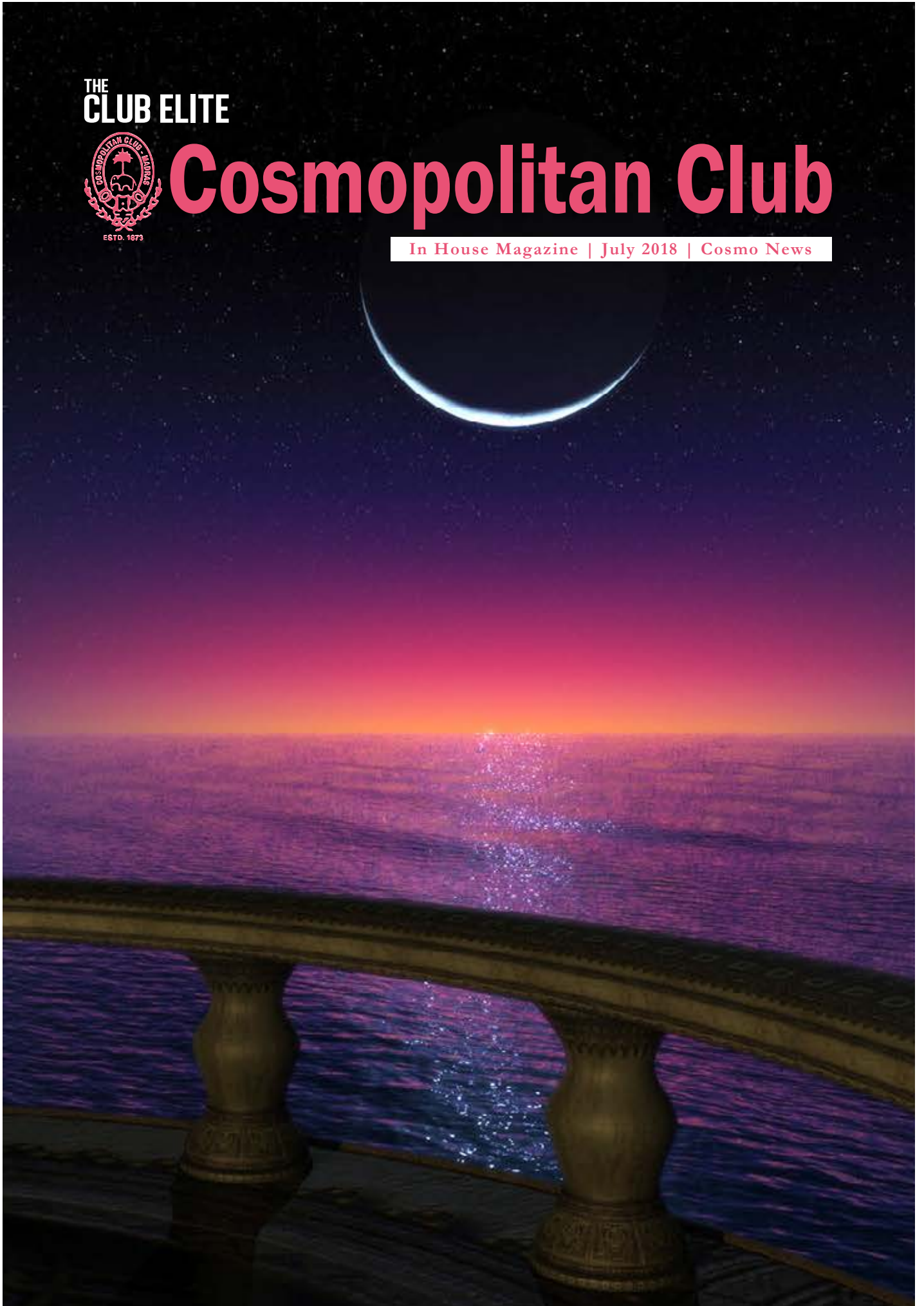


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Know your Stress; Blow your Stress

What is stress?

The word stress has become synonymous with mental stress, which is nothing but a psychological imbalance triggered by environmental factors. We've all experienced one or more stressful situations during our lifetime –work deadlines, competitive exams, lack of support, financial crisis, separation of a loved one, family pressure – and so on and so forth. The question at hand is “why is stress such a big thing?”

Stress can be acute or chronic; positive or negative; obvious or hidden and, most importantly, well-managed or poorly-managed. In other words, stress can be harmless when short-lived, constructive, identified, acknowledged and appropriately managed, and dangerous when not. With life becoming fast-paced and competitive, we are all going through stress in some way or the other.

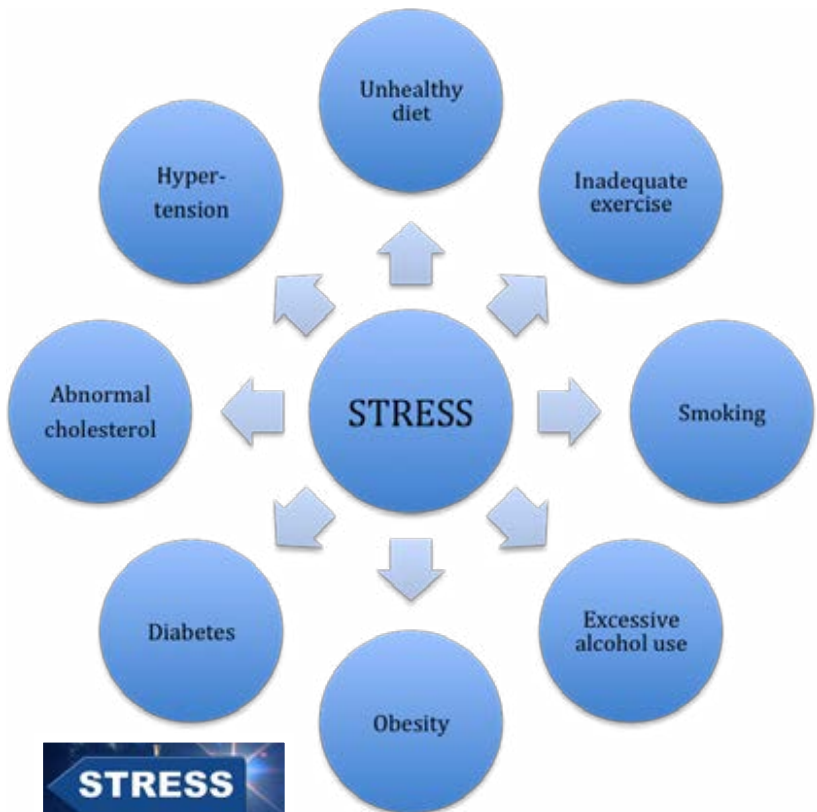
Stress and the heart

There are 9 modifiable risk factors for heart attack of which stress (grouped under psychosocial factors) is the most sinister; it is not only the most difficult to diagnose but also the only factor that can potentially cause all of the other risk factors. Stress can also directly cause heart attack by constricting the blood vessels supplying the heart (coronary vasospasm) and by damaging the heart muscle (stress cardiomyopathy).

Stress management tips

Remember these 10 mantras to blow away your stress:

- Stress does not come from outside; it is your own response to the stressors in the outside world.
- Do not be afraid of stress; do not ignore stress.
- Be aware of your stressors and your reaction to stressful situations.



■ Try to overcome or at least avoid the recurring stressors.

■ Manage your stress appropriately by practicing relaxation techniques or engaging yourself in some hobbies that you enjoy.

■ Talk to your close friends or colleagues about how you feel.

■ Get professional help if necessary; there is nothing wrong in seeking psychological counseling.

■ There is no one size fits all solution

to manage stress; each individual is different.

■ Keep track of your eating pattern, sleep routine and socializing habit; any drastic changes may be due to accumulated stress.

■ Stress may manifest in various ways including headaches, skin problems, gastric acidity, mood changes, poor sexual health and addictions. Seek medical help if in doubt.

Dr. Priya Chockalingam (P490)