



# INDIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (HQS.)

(Registered under the Societies Act XXI of 1860)

Mutually Affiliated with the British & Nepal Medical Associations

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Press Release

## **“Baar baar poocho” urges IMA on the occasion of the upcoming World Health Day**

*10% of the population suffers from depression at any given time*

*Urgent need to raise mass level awareness about the intrinsic role played by the medical fraternity, family and peers in helping overcome depression*

**New Delhi, April 6, 2017:** As per the WHO, 1 in 4 persons will suffer from a mental disorder in their lifetime and 10% of the population suffers from depression at any given point. Unfortunately unlike other diseases with evident physical symptoms, people living with depression do not get the necessary help given the strong social stigma attached to the condition. The need of the hour is to raise mass level awareness about how the medical fraternity, caregivers and peers can help mental health sufferers.

In a clinical setting, there are often crowded rooms and physicians get little time to interact with each patient. Sharing private and sensitive information in such an environment can seem overwhelming for the patients. Even if they are willing to divulge the details, they may hesitate to do so in the first sitting itself. With this background, IMA has launched its **“Baar baar poocho”** campaign aimed at educating its 3-lakh doctor members on how they can help identify and help mental health patients. The campaign warrants that the physician should politely question patients regularly and multiple times, about sensitive information related to depression, alcohol use, smoking habits, drug abuse, and sexual needs and preferences.

"A General Practitioner (GP) is the first point of contact for a patient and must be sensitized on ways in which they can diagnose signs of depression amongst patients and help them seek appropriate care. This program is in line with the MCI's (Medical Council of India) new guidelines that state that 10% of all medical education programs should focus on mental health" said **Padma Shri Awardee Dr. K.K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA.**

IMA has also highlighted the role that the government can play in dispelling the stigma around mental health issues. “First and foremost it is crucial that the treatment of depression and other mental health disorders is included in insurance cover. Presently, chronic patients often do not openly come out and talk about their issues out of the fear that their mediclaim may get rejected”, **Dr KK Aggarwal** added.

IMA also stressed on the need to find a solution to the shortage of mental health care professionals in our country. The Indian government estimates that 6-7% of the country’s population lives with major to minor mental health concerns. This amounts to approximately 70 million Indians, with the number increasing every year. Despite the large number of people who require mental health attention, India has only 6,500 trained psychiatrists and even fewer psychologists. The need of the hour is to arm doctors with the resources required to help patients receive appropriate medical attention.

On World Health Day, let us take a pledge to educate people that depression is like any other chronic physical ailment. It is no different from diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension. All these conditions are treatable and manageable by necessary lifestyle changes, therapy and medication.

**-Ends-**

**About IMA:** Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 29 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 53,000 doctors as its members through more than 1650 active local branches spread across the country.☒

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