Urinary incontinence is a silent problem in many Indians

Those with the disorder face much stigma, with people isolating such patients due to lack of awareness

New Delhi, 10 August, 2017: Statistics indicate that as many as 24 million Indian adults suffer from urinary incontinence and another 27 million suffer from fecal or bowel incontinence. Although the loss of bladder and bowel control is common in people over the age of 40, it can start at the age of 20 as well. As per the IMA, people are not very kind towards those who lose bladder control and can even go to the extent of isolating such people. Old people, in particular, suffer much stigma due to this condition.

Urinary incontinence is a condition in which a person suffers from leaking of urine especially while coughing or sneezing loudly. They may also have a strong urge to urinate, which leads to leakage. However, the condition can be managed or even eliminated altogether with some simple lifestyle changes or medical treatment.

Speaking about this, 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 in a joint statement, said, “Urinary incontinence can be an outcome of many other conditions. In women, the causes could include weak bladder muscles, pregnancy, child birth, forceps delivery, and removal of uterus. Some general reasons are complications from surgery, stroke, or chronic diseases like diabetes, multiple sclerosis (MS), and Parkinson's disease. Diseases that weaken the bladder nerves or spinal cord can also lead to this condition. Incontinence is a disorder and can be treated and managed. Body shaming a person for this or isolating them can lead to embarrassment for them, and sometimes, even depression in the longer run. The fact, however, is that not many people are aware of this condition and need to be educated on the causative factors.”

Urinary incontinence is more common among women than men. About 30%of women between the age of 30 and 60 are thought to suffer from it, compared to 1.5% to 5% of men. Two of risk factors for this condition are obesity and smoking.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, “Treatment for urinary incontinence depends on factors such as the type of incontinence, patient's age, general health, and mental state. Bladder training can help
people get back their bladder control. In some cases, medication is prescribed in combination with exercises for the pelvic muscle. Surgery is done if other treatments are not effective.

Some simple steps can help maintain bladder and urinary health.

- **Behavioural therapies** This includes educating patients about how urine is formed, stored, and expelled.
- **Pelvic floor muscles exercises** These are called Kegels and they help strengthen the muscles that control urination.
- **Dietary changes** Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and acidic drinks. Some things like chocolates, artificial sweeteners, and spices can irritate the bladder.
- **Weight control** Excess weight can put added pressure on the bladder and surrounding muscles. Therefore, maintain an ideal weight or lose weight if you are overweight.
- **Fluid intake** Drink at least eight glasses of water a day to keep the bladder healthy. Drinking less water makes the urine more concentrated and this can irritate the lining of the urethra and bladder.

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**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 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

For further information please contact:
Sanjeev Khanna - 9871079105
Md Adib Ahmad – 9873716235
mediaimahq@gmail.com
IMA Public & Media Advocacy Cell