Immunization in infants and children a must to avoid hearing disabilities

*Childhood hearing loss goes undetected mostly due to lack of awareness and appropriate interventions*

**New Delhi, 18 August 2017:** As per recent reports, about 5% of the world’s population suffers from disabling hearing loss, of which 32 million are children. About 6.3% of the Indian population suffers from hearing impairment and this percentage includes roughly 50 lakh children. As per the IMA, most of these hearing problems can be prevented through immunization against various diseases, by controlling noise pollution, and regulating the use of certain medicines.

Deafness is primarily of two kinds. Nerve deafness is caused due to sound pollution and problems during birth. Conductive deafness is a result of socio-economic factors such as poor hygiene and lack of treatment, leading to chronic infection and deafness.

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, “It is alarming to note that the number of infants and youngsters with hearing impairment has increased substantially over the last few years. Hearing impairment is not recognizable easily during infancy and therefore is highly neglected. The need of the hour is to educate people and create awareness that hearing loss can be combated through early identification and appropriate intervention. Apart from congenital defects, hearing loss can also be the result of external factors. It is imperative to control these with support from a good healthcare system and control over noise levels.”

Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (UNHS) is a medical test for early detection of congenital hearing loss. India still lacks such a system that can identify congenital hearing problems in infants. Adding further, **Dr Aggarwal**, said, “There is a lack of communication, low awareness, and lack of understanding about the importance of early diagnosis and intervention in case of a hearing loss. Delay in identifying this condition can affect language acquisition, social interaction, emotional development, and education in children. Neonatal hearing screening for every newborn is a must and highly recommended.”

Here are some ways to prevent hearing loss in infants.
• Avoid any shock and trauma to the ears as it can cause severe damage to the ear drums resulting in loss of hearing.
• Ensure that water does not enter the infant’s ears while bathing.
• Get them medically tested as early detection can lead to better treatment outcomes.
• Never insert any sharp object in the infant’s ears.
• Keep them away from loud music or other sounds as this can impact their hearing capability. Loud music causes acoustic trauma.
• Make sure that children are immunized against infections like measles, mumps, rubella, and meningitis as per schedule. These infections can also cause hearing loss in children.

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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.

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