



# 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

### Stethoscopes can also harbor pathogens and lead to hospital-acquired infections

*Lack of infection control guidelines and use of outdated technology are some possible reasons*

**New Delhi, 26 August 2017:** As per recent statistics, hospital-acquired infections (HAIs) account for about 2 million cases and 80,000 deaths a year around the world. A study conducted has also found that the rate of HAIs and antimicrobial resistance were markedly higher in India. According to the IMA, one of the primary reasons for this is the overcrowding in hospitals in India thanks to the skewed doctor-patient ratio, which further results in lapses in basic hygiene protocols.

One of the most important instruments used by doctors, the stethoscope, also harbors pathogens. Some of these include *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Clostridium difficile*, and vancomycin-resistant enterococci. These are responsible for many diseases such as pneumonia, urinary tract infections (UTIs), and skin infections, some of which can be life threatening.

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said, “Some of the common causes of HAIs are lack of compliance with infection control guidelines and use of outdated technology. Most infections become clinically evident after 48 hours of hospitalization. The sad fact, however, is that there is lack of knowledge about HAIs in India. Patients and at times, even hospital staff, fail to follow certain basic hygiene protocols which can go a long way in preventing these infections. This is further exacerbated by the fact that there is no specific documentation of HAI incidence in India, at least in the major cities.”

Insufficient hygiene and patient-isolation protocols in operating rooms (OTs) and intensive care units (ICUs), poorly maintained equipment, understaffing and overcrowding are all conditions conducive for breeding of bugs. Patients whose immunity is weak become the easiest target. Apart from this, doctors also use increasingly potent antibiotics on the bugs, and many of these become drug-resistant.

Adding further, **Dr Aggarwal**, said, “Taking cognizance of the impact of antibiotic-resistant infections, IMA has proposed several initiatives to tackle this public health threat – ‘JarooratBhi Hai Kya’, ‘3A Avoid Antibiotic Abuse campaign’, ‘Use Wisely not Widely’, and ‘Think Before you Ink’. IMA has also proposed to come out with a book on ‘When Not to Use Antibiotics’.”

Some basic precautions which can help prevent HAIs include the following.

- Practice hand hygiene.
- Use personal protective equipment appropriately according to risk of body fluid exposure.
- Reprocess re-useable instruments and equipment as appropriate.
- Handle and dispose sharp and potentially infectious material safely.
- Handle waste and linen with care.
- Put environmental control measures including cleaning and spills management in place.
- Make it compulsory to wear disposable gowns, gloves, and eye protection on entry to the patient's room.

**-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 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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