Rural India lacks access to safe drinking water

Need of the hour is to address the issue on an urgent basis and reduce the prevalence of water-borne diseases

New Delhi, 07 August 2017: As per a global report released recently, about 63 million people in rural India lack access to clean water.1 Add to this the fact that only about 26.9 million out of 167.8 million households (16%) in rural areas have access to piped water. Studies have also found the presence of iron in water supplied to 30% rural Indian households. As per the IMA, iron when mixed with water, can cause respiratory system hemorrhage. Lack of access to clean water can also lead to multiple diseases.

Unclean water can increase the prevalence of diseases such as cholera, blinding trachoma, malaria, and dengue in the rural areas, not to mention other water-borne problems. India is one of the fastest growing economies and the need of the hour is to address the issue of water security on an urgent basis.

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, “There is a strain on our country’s water resources due to various reasons. Providing access to safe water is one of the sustainable development goals and the government must increase efforts towards meeting this goal. Diseases can become rampant if people drink water that is contaminated or unclean. The presence of contaminants can result in adverse health effects such as gastrointestinal illness, reproductive problems, and neurological disorders. Infants, young children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with a weak immune system are particularly at risk of illness from some contaminants. Diseases such as amoebiasis, cholera, dysentery, and typhoid are all due to drinking unclean water.”

It is alarming to note that about 140,000 children die from diarrheal diseases each year in the country, as a result of using dirty water. There is “chronic underfunding” of vital water resources in the country and access to safe water is not necessarily the top priority in government agendas.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, “There is a need to supplement access to safe water with the necessary tools, infrastructure, and preparedness to deal with the effects of weather and climate...
change, particularly in rural India. Awareness must be created on the need to drink clean water and how unclean water affects the system. Schools are a good starting ground for awareness creation and the IMA is already undertaking efforts towards educating children on public health issues through the Aao School Chalein programme.”

Some tips to prevent water-borne diseases include the following.

- Always ensure to drink boiled and filtered water.
- Store water in clean containers and clean them every day.
- Avoid consumption of uncovered and openly stored water outside.
- Ensure that the pipes and tanks that supply water to your house are properly maintained and clean.
- Using detergent and hot water, discard or flush any stool in the toilet.

-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.

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