Press Release

Pneumonia a leading cause of death among Indian children

Though progress has been made in combating the diseases, there is still a long way to go

New Delhi, 02 July 2017: According to recent statistics, India has the highest number of pneumonia deaths among children around the world. About three lakh children died of the disease in 2016 alone, said a report. The other countries with the highest global burden of child pneumonia include Nigeria, Pakistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Angola. Although there has been some progress in combating pneumonia among young children in these nations, they still account for hundreds of thousands of preventable deaths around the world.

Pneumonia is a form of acute respiratory infection affecting the lungs. In a healthy person, the small sacs called alveoli in the lungs fill with air while breathing. However, in pneumonia, these get filled with pus and fluid, making breathing painful and limiting oxygen intake. Pneumonia can be caused by viruses, bacteria, and fungi.

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, "The viruses and bacteria commonly found in a child's nose or throat can infect the lungs if inhaled. They can also spread through airborne droplets such as those during coughing or sneezing. Most healthy children can fight this infection with natural immunity. However, in some children, especially those whose immune systems are compromised due to malnutrition or undernourishment, or no breastfeeding, this infection can become serious. Some other risk factors include indoor air pollution, living in crowded homes, and parental smoking."

Some symptoms of this disease include rapid or difficult breathing, cough, fever, chills, loss of appetite, and wheezing (particularly in viral infections). In severe pneumonia, a child can undergo lower chest wall indrawing, where the chest moves in or retracts during inhalation Infants can experience unconsciousness, hypothermia, and convulsions.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, "Pneumonia can be treated with antibiotics. A large majority of the cases can be tackled at home itself. Hospitalization is recommended only in very severe cases. Pneumonia is not contagious, but the upper respiratory viruses and bacteria that lead to it are. It is
a good idea to keep kids away from anyone with stuffy or runny nose, sore throat, cough, or respiratory infection in general."

It is imperative to improve a child's natural immunity through adequate nutrition and this starts with exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. Breastfeeding is not only effective in preventing pneumonia, but can also help in reducing the duration of the illness. Some other points to consider are reducing indoor air pollution and encouraging good hygiene in crowded homes.

-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
hsgima@gmail.com
IMA Public & Media Advocacy Cell