### Press Release

**Rotavirus, one of the leading causes of diarrheal infections in India**

- Accounts for about 40% of all diarrhea cases
- Rotavac introduced to combat the spread of this infection among infants and young children

**New Delhi, 21 June 2017:** Statistics indicate that one of the leading causes of moderate-to-severe diarrhea in India is Rotavirus and accounts for about 40% of all diarrhea cases requiring treatment. More children across India die due to diarrhea than AIDS, malaria, and measles combined. It has also been estimated that India alone contributes to 22% of all global diarrheal deaths in children below 5 years. Among those more vulnerable include malnourished children and those with poor access to medical care.

Between 80,000 to 1,00,000 children die in India annually due to Rotavirus diarrhea and another 9 lakh are admitted to the hospital with severe diarrhea. A highly contagious disease, Rotavirus is spread when a child comes in contact with infected water, food, or hands. This is known as the fecal-oral route. This virus can survive for long periods of time on hands and various surfaces. This condition also increases the risk of dehydration in very young children.

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, "Rotavirus attacks the villus tip cells of the small intestine, obstructing digestion and absorption. Once the villi become blunted, the malabsorption of carbohydrates leads to diarrhea. In young infants and children, this infection can further cause severe diarrhea, dehydration, electrolyte imbalance, and metabolic acidosis. The virus is shed in high concentration in the stool of the infected children. They can easily catch an infection by touching something that is contaminated and then putting their hands in the mouth. The risk of infection is more in hospitals and day care settings."

Last year, the health ministry launched India's first, indigenous rotavirus vaccine called Rotavac. Developed indigenously under a public-private partnership between the Ministry of Science Technology and the Health Ministry, this vaccine is expected to significantly reduce hospitalization and other conditions associated with diarrhea due to Rotavirus infection.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, "Making this vaccine free of cost is indeed a great move by the government. It is immensely important for the health and well-being of children in the country."
Apart from vaccination, it is important to create awareness on maintaining adequate hygiene and sanitation and also ensure access to clean drinking water to avoid any such infections from spreading.

Here are some tips to prevent Rotavirus infection from spreading.

- Maintain proper hygiene around the house. Clean all surfaces and the floor thoroughly.
- Wash your hands after you change the infant’s diaper or use the washroom.
- Practice food safety at home.
- Drink clean water and keep all containers closed.

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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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