Press Release

Leprosy still a cause for concern

Cases show a 138% increase in Dadra and Nagar Haveli

New Delhi, 02 May 2017: India was declared leprosy free in the year 2005, as per statistics, when new cases fell to less than 1 per 10,000. Despite this, the country still accounts for the largest number of people affected with leprosy in the world (58%), with a registered prevalence of 86,319 and 1, 25,785 new detected cases. According to government figures, the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli has shown a leprosy prevalence of 6.2 cases per 10,000 population in 2016/17, which is a dramatic increase from 1.88 cases per 10,000 population noted in 2007/08.

As per a report submitted to ICMR recently by a team of researchers, poor ventilation, the large tribal population in the Union Territory, and the thick forest cover and hilly terrain are the possible factors causing a rise in the number of leprosy cases. Although the leprosy programme in the union territory has been strengthened, there is still a long way to go before it is completely eradicated.

Speaking on 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, "India declared having eradicated leprosy in 2005. Since then, all states barring four have seen a drastic drop in the number of leprosy cases. However, statistics show that the cases are on a rise in this union territory and are increasing by the year. Leprosy is a chronic disease with a long incubation period of about 5 to 7 years. Apart from many other factors, one major contributor to infection in a community is an untreated or neglected case. This then becomes then disease agent. To eliminate the source of infection, it is important to detect any such cases in a community early on and interrupt the active transmission of the disease."

Leprosy is an infectious disease of the skin and nerves and starts appearing as a light-colored patch on the skin. It usually starts silently and subtly and affects the nerves, skin, and eyes. Going forward, leprosy can cause permanent and progressive physical disability. More than the disease, it is the intense social discrimination faced by leprosy patients, which is a cause for concern in the country even today.
Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, "Further complications due to leprosy can be prevented if the disease is detected early. It is important to start multi-drug therapy (MDT) immediately upon diagnosis. Starting MDT late can leave the person with physical deformities and disability."

It is important to understand that people affected with leprosy should not be isolated socially. They are as capable of leading a regular life as any normal person and can also get married and have children. The need of the hour is to increase the number of skilled staff in the country who can treat this disease, create awareness among people about this condition, and reduce the stigma associated with leprosy.

-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