Press Release

Tuberculosis still a cause for concern

About 45% of the multi-drug cases are from India and two other countries

New Delhi, 03 May 2017: According to a report by WHO, India has 27% of the world's new tuberculosis (TB) cases. TB is one of the biggest infectious diseases in India. The country accounts for a high number of worldwide TB cases due to which the global estimates have also gone up from 9.6 million to 10.4 million. Apart from this, about 2.5% of the new TB cases are resistant to Rifampicin, or to both Rifampicin and Isoniazid, the two most commonly used anti-TB drugs.

About 45% of the multi-drug resistant TB cases in the world are from India, China, and the Russian Federation. Although TB is treatable, treatment reaches only 59% of the estimated TB patients in India. This is due to the fact that many people in different regions of India still do not fall under the ambit of the government's TB programme.

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 "In India, we still rely heavily on insensitive diagnostic tools such as sputum smears. For the longest time, our TB programmes have ignored the TB patients in the private sector. There is a need to carry out nationwide prevalence surveys as India has been underestimating TB prevalence majorly. We must also ensure that those who need treatment have access to it no matter what corner of the country they are in."

TB is a bacterial disease and spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes. There are no obvious symptoms in a person infected with the bacteria that cause TB. In case symptoms do appear, they include cough (sometimes blood-tinged), weight loss, night sweats, and fever. TB is completely curable and preventable. Those with active TB symptoms require a long course of treatment involving consumption of multiple antibiotics.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, "Some people can develop TB within a short time frame soon after they are infected and there are others, who can get sick much later. It is imperative to get treated for latent TB infection as about 5% to 10% of the infected people who do not receive..."
treatment tend to develop the disease at some point in their lives. Those with a weak immune system need to be particularly careful."

The following steps can be taken to reduce exposure to a person with TB in households.

- Ventilate the house adequately
- Educate the person on cough etiquette and respiratory hygiene. Encourage them to keep their mouth covered and maintain personal hygiene.
- It is better for TB patients to not spend much time outdoors or in the public.

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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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