Press Release

Treatment gap and social stigma, the biggest barriers for those with epilepsy

*Need to remove misconceptions and myths associated with the condition*

New Delhi, 17 November 2017: About 80% of those with epilepsy live in low and middle-income countries, as per reports by a global health body (WHO). Over 50 million people around the world suffer from this condition and about three-fourth of these live in low- and middle-income countries. The ‘treatment gap’ and the social stigma associated with the disorder in India further exacerbate conditions for people with epilepsy.

Epilepsy is a chronic disorder of the brain characterized by recurrent ‘seizures’ or ‘fits’. The seizures are caused due to sudden, excessive electrical discharges in the neurons (brain cells). The condition can affect people at any age and each age group has unique concerns and problems.

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 International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) has expanded the definition of epilepsy to incorporate a single unprovoked seizure with a probability of future seizures. The new definition also specifies that epilepsy can be considered ‘resolved’ if a patient has been seizure-free for 10 years, with no seizure medicines for the last 5 years. The previous definition stipulated that a patient needs to have 2 unprovoked seizures more than 24 hours apart. Epilepsy is mostly treatable with medications. The critical thing about epilepsy is that treatment should not be delayed. Start the treatment as soon as it is diagnosed. This prevents further deterioration of the condition."

Some causative factors for epilepsy include brain damage from prenatal and perinatal injury, congenital abnormalities, brain infections, stroke and brain tumors, head injury/accidents, and prolonged high fever during childhood.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, “A lot of progress has been made in the country for treating epilepsy and controlling the onset of seizures. Many effective new anti-epileptic drugs are available in the market today. India also many centers that offer treatment facility for this condition. Only mass awareness can dispel the associated myths with epilepsy. It is important to create awareness that those with epilepsy can lead a normal life, get married, have children, and even work. This is not a contagious condition and does not spread through contact.”
One of the major reasons for incomplete control of seizures is non-compliance. Some tips to prevent onset of seizures and the condition from getting worse are as follows:

- Adhere to the prescribed medication
- Following a regular sleep cycle to remain stress-free
- Keep yourself hydrated
- Eat a balanced diet
- Get regular medical checkups done

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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.

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