Swine flu cases on the rise in India

Timely treatment and prevention essential to preventing deaths

New Delhi, 07 September 2017: According to recently released reports, swine flu has infected 18,000 people and killed 871 in 2017 so far. This is a nine-fold increase from last year when 265 deaths were reported. Data shows that while Maharashtra, Gujarat, Kerala, and Rajasthan have been majorly affected by this disease, Delhi has also shown an increase in the number of affected people. It is alarming that the country is still underprepared in terms of tackling swine flu, feels IMA.

Swine flu is caused by the H1N1 virus. This disease initially spread through pigs but is now transmitted from one person to another as well. The virus enters the body when a person inhales contaminated droplets or is transferred from a contaminated surface to the eyes, nose, or mouth of a person.

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, “Swine flu deaths are more common in those who do not receive treatment on time and those who do not adhere to medications. As the elderly and people with preexisting chronic conditions have lower immunity, this disease is more likely to affect them. It is important that such people get vaccinated. Vaccination is critical in preventing H1N1 influenza. This is because it helps in developing herd immunity. Herd immunity is when large parts of a population are immune to the virus, slowing down its transmission. There is an urgent need to make seasonal flu vaccination a critical part of India’s vaccination policy.”

Symptoms of swine flu include high fever, dry cough, nasal secretions, fatigue, and headache. In some patients, it can also cause sore throat, rash, body (muscle) aches or pains, headaches, chills, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, “Doctors are advised to quickly treat suspected influenza with antiviral drugs in high-risk outpatients, those with progressive disease and all hospitalized patients. Tamiflu (oseltamivir phosphate) is the treatment of choice but it should be taken under medical supervision. It must be given in the first 48 hours. It is given in severely low patients, pregnant women, underlying organ disease or age less than 5 years.”
Here are some tips to prevent swine flu.

- The very first step to get vaccinated on an annual basis. This will prevent you from getting infected by the disease.
- Wash your hands with soap and water every time you venture out and come back. This will prevent any germs from entering the body through contact.
- Avoid contact with someone who has swine flu.
- Wash all raw materials well before cooking. Avoid consumption of raw food.
- People with low immunity and existing health conditions should wear masks to avoid the intake the virus from the environment.

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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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