Press Release

There is an urgent need to reduce the incidence of Infant and child mortality in India: IMA

In 2015, the under-five mortality rate in India was 48% per 1000 live births

New Delhi, Jan 16, 2017: India ranks first among countries with the highest number of child deaths in the world. In 2015, out of the total 5.9 million child deaths globally, 1.2 million i.e. 20% of the world’s share, occurred in India. The Millennium Development Goal (MDG)-4 to reduce child mortality had established a target of two-third reduction in under-five mortality by 2015, a mark India has failed to achieve.

There are large inequities in the under-five mortality rates across socio-economic groups and various states of India. This has largely impeded the acceleration in government programs. A significant majority of these deaths are due to preventable causes and IMA recognises the urgent need to improve the quality of perinatal care for increasing the chances of childhood survival under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

Padma Shri Awardee Dr KK 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, “Much of the progress towards reducing under-five mortality has been undermined by the persistence of several risk factors associated with infant and child mortality such as nutritional status of the mother, maternal education (less than class 8), early childbearing (earlier than 20 years) and inadequate birth spacing (less than 24 months). To clearly address the growing burden of infant deaths, these determinants must first be tackled at the grassroot level.”

The top most preventable causes of under-five mortality across the world are the following:

Pneumonia

1. Preterm complications
2. Newborn infections
3. Diarrhea
4. Birth complications
5. Malaria
6. Childhood malnutrition

“The progress in infant mortality programs needs to complement the issues at the socio-economic level where the major determinants of child mortality are centered. Awareness about important factors like immediate and exclusive breastfeeding, skilled attendants for antenatal, birth, and postnatal care especially in rural areas; access to adequate nutrition, knowledge of symptoms of danger signs in the child’s health; water, sanitation and hygiene and immunizations needs to be created”, added Dr Aggarwal.

More than 6 million children still die before their sixth birthday, each year. Clearly, more needs to be done to improve child survival rates. These solutions (as above) are amongst the various interventions suggested by the World Health Organization (WHO). Reducing maternal mortality is equally important for progress in this regard. Medical institutions, private government and charitable organizations need to join hands to further this cause.

Sources


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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 29 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 53,000 doctors as its members through more than 1650 active local branches spread across the country.

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