IMA launches Anti Leprosy Movement on World Anti Leprosy Day

New Delhi, Jan 30, 2017: Leprosy (Hansen’s disease) is an infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae* that involves the skin and peripheral nerves. The disease mainly affects the skin, the peripheral nerves, mucosa of the upper respiratory tract, and also the eyes. Although not highly infectious, leprosy is transmitted via droplets, from the nose and mouth, during close and frequent contacts with untreated cases. Untreated, leprosy can cause progressive and permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs and eyes.

Given the crucial role played by diagnosis and a full course of treatment for preventing lifelong neuropathy and disability, IMA launched an Anti Leprosy Movement on the occasion of World Anti Leprosy Day yesterday. Over 2.8 lakh IMA members will be educated about ways to treat and detect Leprosy. A series of public health campaigns will also be initiated.

Early physical exam findings include hypopigmented or reddish skin patches, diminished sensation or loss of sensation in involved areas, paresthesias, painless wounds or burns, and tender, enlarged peripheral nerves. Neuropathy and ophthalmic injury can also occur. The diagnosis is established when at least one of these physical findings is present and a skin biopsy obtained from the leading edge of the skin lesion confirms the presence of acid-fast bacilli in a cutaneous nerve.

“The social stigma associated with Leprosy is the primary obstacle to self-reporting and early treatment. It is important that mass awareness is raised about how the condition is preventable and treatable. It is the responsibility of the medical fraternity to counsel patients and their families. Timely detection and treatment can save lives” said Padma Shri Awardee Dr KK Aggarwal – National President Indian Medical Association (IMA), President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA.

The treatment of leprosy consists involves the administration of multiple drugs. Tuberculoid disease (tuberculoid and borderline tuberculoid) can be treated with the use of dapsone 100 mg daily and rifampin600 mg daily. The treatment of lepromatous disease (lepromatous, borderline lepromatous, and mid-borderline) consists of therapy with all three drugs (clofazimine(50 mg daily added). The duration of treatment for Paucibacillary Leprosy is six months and multi bacillary Leprosy duration is 12 months. Neuritis must be treated aggressively with steroids to try to prevent or minimize nerve injury and thus prevent deformity and disability.
Control measures for leprosy include

- Clinical management of active cases
- Contact management.
- Development of an improved vaccine is an important research goal for prevention.
- Household contacts should be evaluated annually for evidence of disease for at least five years and should be educated to seek immediate attention if suspicious skin or neurologic changes develop.
- It is important to remember that Prophylaxis for contacts is not warranted
- Vaccination with BCG is partially protective for leprosy; a single dose appears to be 50 percent protective, and two doses further increase protection

-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 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.

For further information please contact:
Sanjeev Khanna - 9871079105
Md Adib Ahmad – 9873716235
Mediaimah2@gmail.com
IMA Public & Media Advocacy Cell