Adverse drug reactions: Vigilance and prevention

Over 50% of all adverse drug reactions treated in hospitals and emergency care are preventable.

People can report adverse events to IMA at 9717776514

New Delhi, Dec 03, 2016: Adverse drug events (ADEs) result in significant injuries and deaths every year. Many ADE related injuries, mortalities and incurring hospital costs can be decreased if healthcare institutions strengthen their systems for preventing and detecting ADEs.

According to Swedish researchers, who conducted a meta-analysis of 22 studies. Human error is inevitable, and therefore systems must be made to reduce the error. The study concluded that:

- In outpatient setting, the frequency of preventable adverse drug reactions resulting in hospitalization or emergency treatment is 2% and of these 51 percent is preventable.
- In the elderly, 71 percent of drug reactions are preventable.
- In admitted patients the frequency of harmful drug reactions is 1.6 percent and 45 percent of them are preventable.
- A third of preventable adverse drug reactions are life threatening.

Research studies have also found that the type and severity of ADE affects length of stay and costs in hospitals. Patients with severe ADEs like arrhythmia, bone-marrow depression, seizures, or bleeding averaged a 20-day hospital stay while those with less severe cases, for 13 days and those with no ADE, only 5 days. Hospital costs for them were much higher as compared to non-ADE patients.

Padma Shri Awardee Dr. K.K Aggarwal, President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and National President Elect Indian Medical Association (IMA), stated that, “Many preventable drug reactions like drug overdoses and internal bleeding associated with the improper use of blood thinners and painkillers are life-threatening especially in the elderly. There are many reasons for these reactions and may include poor coordination of care, lack of time and knowledge among health professionals, and lack of patient education. Medication Errors Are a Frequent Cause of Adverse Drug Events, the factors that may lead to such errors include- Missed dosage, illegible prescription, wrong technique, duplicate therapy, drug interactions, equipment failure, preparation or formulation error or improper monitoring.”

Both in a clinical setting and at the patient community level, adverse drug reactions can be detected and prevented up to a significant extent.

“Doctors and patients should be more proactive about reporting adverse drug events. ADR monitoring and reporting is still inadequate in India; Pharmacovigilance program of India (PvPI) is
doing a commendable job. Current adverse drug incident reporting system need to be improved, moreover, strengthening nursing medication and monitoring systems is also required. What is crucial is to create a better environment for healthcare professionals so that they report ADRs without hesitation or fear of punishment or severe repercussions. The practice of self medication also needs to be curbed”, added Dr. K.K Aggarwal.

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About Heart Care Foundation of India

Initiated in 1986, the Heart Care Foundation of India is a leading National NGO working in the field of creating mass health awareness among people from all walks of life and providing solutions for India's everyday healthcare needs. The NGO uses consumer-based entertainment modules to impart health education and increase awareness amongst people. A leading example of this is the Perfect Health Mela; an annual event started in 1993 that is attended by over 2-3 lakh people each year. The Mela showcases activities across categories such as health education seminars and check-ups, entertainment programs, lifestyle exhibitions, lectures, workshops, and competitions. In addition to this, the NGO conducts programs and camps to train people on the technique of hands only CPR through its CPR 10 mantra for revival after a sudden cardiac arrest. They currently hold three Limca book of world records for the maximum number of people trained in hands-only CPR in one go. Keeping article 21 of the Indian Constitution in mind, which guarantees a person Right to Life, Heart Care Foundation of India has also recently initiated a project called the Sameer Malik Heart Care Foundation Fund to ensure that no one dies of a heart disease just because they cannot afford treatment.

For more information, please contact

Heart Care Foundation of India

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