HIV and AIDS remain a major social taboo in India

A UN report shows that India has the third-highest number of people living with HIV infection in the world accounting for about 4 out of 10 people suffering from the infection in Asia

New Delhi, 30th November 2016: In a country as diverse and as large as India is, it is possible for the population to contract innumerable moderate to severe diseases and infections. One of the most dangerous being HIV/AIDS. More than 2.1 million people continue to be affected by this deadly virus in the country despite the mass awareness campaigns run by the government. What makes it worse is the social taboo that is associated with the disease often forcing patients to keep the disease hidden from others.

To simply understand, HIV and AIDS, both terms are often used together but are different. HIV or Human immunodeficiency virus, which attacks and destroys white blood cells or T Lymphocytes in the immune system making the human body prone to all types of diseases, cancer germs and bacteria. HIV can be transmitted from one person to another when a person comes in a direct contact with the mucous membrane or the bloodstream of the infected person.

On the other hand, AIDS is a condition, which develops in the advanced stages of HIV infection due to a weak immune system.

Padma Shri Awardee Dr. K.K Aggarwal, President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and National President Elect Indian Medical Association (IMA) said, "HIV/AIDS continue to affect a large section of the Indian population despite various mass awareness campaigns, availability of various state-of-the-art medical interventions, and evolving technology. It is because of the social stigma that our society has associated with the disease; that people continue to avoid routine check-ups. It is important to educate the masses about the various disease prevention measures along with the fact that people with HIV can live a normal life. The government and various healthcare associations must also ensure the availability of condoms in smaller cities and towns where the disease is more rampant."

Causes of HIV/AIDS:

- **Sexual Transmission:** An individual can contact HIV/AIDS if he comes in sexual contact or with a person who is already infected with HIV through sexual secretions like rectal, genital or oral mucous membranes. It happens when two individuals indulge in unprotected sex or shares any object (sex toys) with a person who is infected.
- **Perinatal transmission:** A child can come in contact with the HIV during pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding.
- **Blood Transmission:** Contacting HIV through bloodstream and blood transfusion is although rare, can still happen despite staunch screening and precautionary measures. And one of the most common causes of this is sharing and reusing syringes contaminated with HIV. Additionally, individuals who use tattoo syringes without necessary precaution can also spread the infection.
To fully understand the nature of the diseases, it is important to know about the myths associated with HIV/AIDS. One of the biggest existing myths is that related to the transmission of the HIV/AIDS virus. HIV/AIDS cannot be transmitted by casually coming in contact with an already infected person through gestures like shaking hands, hugging, kissing, sneezing, touching, using the same toilet, sharing clothes and towels, sharing the same cutlery or mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

HIV/AIDS can be diagnosed with the help of a blood test. And if that blood test comes positive, an individual is advised to do follow up for the blood tests to be sure that the person is HIV positive. If that is the case, the person is suggested to undergo several other tests to see how far the disease has progressed for the suitable treatment. In cases where an individual comes in contact with an infected person, it is advised that he should take up the tests at the earliest.

- Ends -

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

Sanjeev Khanna-9871079105
Md Adib Ahmed- 9873716235
Email- media.hcfi@gmail.com