

Pakistan Ranks Eighth in the World for the Number of Child Deaths with 478,000 under Five Deaths Every Year

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan ranks eighth in the world for the number of child deaths with 478,000 under five deaths every year. Almost two-thirds of these deaths, (mostly due to newborn causes) are related to care of mothers during pregnancy, delivery and during post-natal period.

A combination of low birth weight, under-nutrition, respiratory infection, diarrhea and anemia are the prime causes of this high mortality and morbidity rates among Pakistani children. Apart from the burden of neonatal causes, pneumonia and diarrhea (22 per cent) are the main killers of children under the age of five years.

Compelling evidence-based analysis shows that hygiene and sanitation are among the most cost-effective public health interventions to reduce childhood mortality. Access to a toilet alone can reduce diarrhea deaths by over 30 per cent and hand washing by more than 40 per cent.

The link between sanitation and health is not just theoretical. To acknowledge the impact of hygiene and sanitation practices on incidence of pneumonia and diarrhea, 'Child Health and Sanitation Week' was observed in six districts (three in Punjab, one each in the NWFP, Sindh and Balochistan) in months of April

and October 2008 with support from UNICEF Pakistan.

The campaign, launched at national and provincial levels reaching a total of 11 million people (around two million households) proved that pneumonia and diarrhea, both of which have seasonal occurrence can benefit from focused mass awareness campaigns.

Public messages on television, radio and press accompanied by a display of banners and mosque announcements and special sermons by religious leaders that "practicing cleanliness is half of the Islamic belief", contributed a great deal for public knowledge. Lady health workers, community volunteers and municipal corporations undertook an enhanced sanitation drive to reinforce health and hygiene messages.

The results of a pre and post survey assessment, to gauge the coverage of vaccination and de-worming and increase in knowledge about the key messages showed as much as 10 to 30 per cent increase in children (0-23 months) starting immunization. Children (2-5 years) who had received de-worming tablet increased from 24 per cent to 87 per cent. While 20 to 25 per cent increase in

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2nd Annual Meeting of Pakistan Society for the Study of Liver Diseases (PSSLD) Almost 10 - 12 Million People are Chronically Infected with Hepatitis B & C



Dr. Rasheed Joana, Director General Health Pakistan, Dr. S. M. Wasim Jafri the President of PSSLD, Dr. Saeed Hamid, Secretary General of PSSLD, Dr. Razza Masood, Director of National Institute of Liver and Gastro-Intestinal Diseases (NILGID) and Dr. Zaigham Abbas Chairman Organizing Committee are addressing

The Inauguration Ceremony of the Annual Meeting of the PSSLD was held at the Hotel Pearl Continental, Karachi. The Chief Guest on the occasion was Dr. Rasheed Joana, Director General Health Pakistan.

The Inauguration session was attended by people of different walks of life including physician's community, comprising of Gastroenterologists, Hepatologists and Internists.

The Chief Guest on the occasion Dr. Rasheed Joana, Director General Health Pakistan appreciated the work that the Society is doing in order to help physicians as well as the public at large in identifying liver diseases and managing them. Through the efforts of the Society, less would be achieved with the passage of time through dedication and teamwork. During the speech, he also lauded the efforts of the Government of Pakistan who try to play a pivotal role in helping all the patients suffering from Hepatitis in Pakistan with better diagnostic &

therapeutic facilities.

Further Dr. S. M. Wasim Jafri the President of the Society pointed out the main objectives of the Society which puts research in the field of liver diseases as its topmost, followed by continuous medical education and public awareness programs to that the public at large in Pakistan, is made aware of the deteriorating situation of health, particularly related to liver diseases.

Dr. Jafri informed the audience about the problems that the physicians face in the country as a result of poor facilities available in the public sector hospitals as the diagnostics for diagnosing liver diseases other than simple test are not available at all and hence the poor population either left undiagnosed or they go to private institutions for healthcare which are expensive and certainly not bearable to majority of the population. He said that Pakistan with the population of over 160 million and almost 10-12 million people who are chronically

infected with Hepatitis B & C are suffering from these diseases lack the liver transplantation program as this does not exist in either private or public sector healthcare facilities yet. He urged the Government of Pakistan to at least start a Liver Transplantation Program in the provincial capitals which should become referral hospitals for the patients in their respective provinces. There is dire need for Liver Transplantation Program and we should not leave any stone unturned to establish such program.

Dr. Saeed Hamid, Secretary General of PSSLD & Chairman Scientific Committee said that hepatitis B & C, alcoholic liver disease, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease and autoimmune liver disease were the most common liver diseases in the country. He stated that one-third of the cases progress towards the progressive chronic liver disease and the complications may lead to shrinkage of liver (cirrhosis), accumulation of fluid in abdomen (ascites), vomiting of blood

(hematemesis) and hepatic encephalopathy.

Dr. Razza Masood, Director of National Institute of Liver and Gastro-Intestinal Diseases (NILGID), highlighting the magnitude of problem stated that liver ailments were the third most common amongst all the diseases in the country.

Dr. Zaigham Abbas Chairman Organizing Committee in his speech said that the theme of the meet for this year is 'Consensus Development in Liver Diseases'. The three-day event features various sessions on public awareness, Hepatitis B & C, and management of liver cancer. Dr. Abbas further enlightened on the subject and said that the prevalence of liver diseases, particularly Hepatitis B & C, hepatocellular carcinoma, and portal hypertension, was rising in the country. Hepatitis C has a prevalence of 6 percent while that of hepatitis B is found to be 3 percent among the Pakistani population. The Meeting would continue for next two days.

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