

**World Rabies Day: 28<sup>th</sup> September 2012**

**Marching ahead towards prevention and control of human rabies in India: A Pilot project**

Quest for preventing human deaths due to rabies, a disease of antiquity, is on since a long time. An estimated 20,000 human deaths and 17.4 million animal bites occur annually. Control of rabies involves two components viz elimination of human deaths due to rabies through timely and appropriate post exposure prophylaxis to all exposed since rabies is endemic in the country and control of canine rabies through mass immunization to break the chain of transmission of the disease and animal birth control for dog population management. Multiple agencies/sectors are carrying out control activities. However no tangible results have been achieved so far as the efforts are patchy and have not been carried out in organized and coordinated manner.

To test the **strategy** a pilot project on prevention and control of human rabies has been carried out as “New Initiative” under 11<sup>th</sup> Plan in 5 cities with NCDC as nodal agency. The **objectives** of the project are prevention of human deaths due to rabies, **enhance awareness in general community, develop trained health manpower, strengthen diagnostic facilities, strengthen surveillance and maintenance of continuous surveillance and sensitization of other sectors.**

**Achievements**

Under the pilot project, to date, 43 core trainers trained at NCDC, Delhi have in-turn trained approximately 2065 doctors and paramedical staff in appropriate animal bite management in the pilot project. Improvements are:

- Uniform and appropriate animal bite management as per the guidelines
- Wound washing facilities in all the centres.
- Implementation of ID route -wider coverage in the available quantity of vaccines and economical PEP: Fifty four centres in the pilot project cities have implemented ID route of inoculation of cell culture vaccines
- Increased and appropriate use (local Infiltration in the wound) of immunoglobulins
- Establishment of new ARCs in pilot project cities has made PEP within reach of animal bite victims and cut down the out of pocket expenditure.

Analysis prior to initiation of the project indicated that many people do not seek post exposure treatment after animal bites leading to high mortality. General community related rabies to “Dog-bites” only. The prototype IEC material to create awareness in general community was developed at NCDC, the pilot project cities translated the same in local languages and disseminated it adopting innovative methods (Fig1). After the initiation of the project there is enhancement in awareness regarding animals transmitting rabies and timely and appropriate animal bite management in general community as indicated by increase in attendance at ARCs and reporting of animal bites other than dogs also.

In addition, one laboratory in each pilot project city has been strengthened, surveillance has been strengthened and interface has been developed with veterinary sector.

**Experience gained in the implementation of pilot project on prevention and control of human rabies indicates that strategy is feasible, reproducible and implementable.**

**Fig1: IEC in local languages**

