

World Malaria Day

Call to close gaps in prevention and treatment

STAR HEALTH DESK

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is calling on the global health community to urgently address significant gaps in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of malaria. Despite dramatic declines in malaria cases and deaths since 2000, more than half a million lives are still lost to this preventable disease each year.

At least three quarters of malaria deaths occur in children under 5. Yet in 2013, only about 1 in 5 African children with malaria received effective treatment for the disease, 15 million pregnant women did not receive a single dose of the recommended preventive drugs, and an estimated 278 million people in Africa still live in households without a single insecticide-treated bednet.

"As we celebrate World Malaria Day on April 25, we must recognise the urgent need to expand prevention measures and quality-assured diagnostic testing and treatment to reduce the human suffering caused by malaria," says Dr Hiroki Nakatani, WHO Assistant Director-General for HIV/AIDS,



Tuberculosis, Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases.

Updated "Guidelines for the Treatment of Malaria" are being issued by WHO this week. They include the latest recommendations on preventive treatment for infants, children under 5 and pregnant women. The updated guidelines should help expand

access to recommended treatments.

For uncomplicated malaria cases, WHO recommends the use of artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs). Globally, 392 million ACT courses were procured by malaria-endemic countries in 2013, up from just 11 million in 2005. However,

millions of people are still not treated for malaria, primarily because the communities most affected by the disease have limited access to health care.

WHO recommends diagnostic testing for all suspected malaria cases to ensure that malaria drugs are used only for those who have the disease and that — when a

test is negative — other causes of fever are investigated.

Rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs) are now widely available and more than 319 million were purchased in 2013 compared to 46 million in 2008. Despite this progress, nearly 40% of people with suspected malaria at public health facilities in Africa are not tested.

WHO also recommends that the most vulnerable groups in malaria-endemic areas of sub-Saharan Africa—pregnant women, children under 5, and infants—receive preventive treatment to reduce the risk of malaria infection. Preventive treatments are highly cost-effective, with the potential to save tens of thousands of lives each year. Coverage with such treatments, however, remains low and needs to be significantly scaled up.

The need to urgently address gaps in preventive treatment for malaria is also being highlighted by the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership, which has issued a global call to action to increase national coverage with preventive treatment in pregnancy.

Source: World Health Organisation

HAVE A NICE DAY

Beauty & the beast-3



Dr Rubaiul Murshed

We have been talking about anger management for last two weeks. Here goes the last part.

Take a timeout: When you have a hard time, leave the fighting spot intelligently (no rush) without making an angry face. Then ventilate your painful emotions to your well wishers. But avoid people and places that bring out your worst. Besides this, you may go for window shopping or doing something you enjoy. Watch good movies and have an environment to think about how to handle what's ahead without getting angry. Ask yourself if are you truly angry or you are in a bad mood for other reasons.

Use common sense: Even when it is justified, anger can quickly become crazy and irrational. Make the relationship your priority. Remind yourself that like everything, your recent anger is also not going to last; life itself is temporary. You are just experiencing one of life's rough moments. Do this each time you start feeling angry — you will get a more balanced view. Never jump into conclusions. Always fight fair and be willing to forgive. Only strong people can forgive — so, why don't you be one of them!

Early life: Sometimes you need to pinpoint the reason. Try to realise that we are not often angry for the reasons we think. It has been observed that there are some people — they are often angry when they don't get what they need as a child or during adolescent period.

After all these above techniques you might not control the situation you are in, but at least you can control how you express your anger. You can express your anger without being orally or physically rude. At the end of the day, be sure of this — you will be the winner — even if you lose first or second or third time. Always manage your anger first as mental peace is greatly needed and it is prerequisite for a physical health also.

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HEALTH bulletin

Meningitis in children — a very serious disease

Niger meningitis: Schools shut to curb outbreak

All schools in and around Niger's capital, Niamey, have been shut until Monday because of a meningitis outbreak that has killed 85 people this year, reports BBC.

A shortage of vaccines to treat the current strain has caused the outbreak to spread, the authorities say. A campaign to vaccinate all children between two and 15 will begin on Friday, but only half of the 1.2m doses needed are currently available.

The prime minister has asked for help getting the remaining doses. "For the rest of the needed vaccines, we are appealing to all our partners to come to our aid to supplement the stock of vaccine doses we direly need," Reuters news agency reports Brigi Rafini as saying on national television.

The authorities have warned people against using unauthorised vaccines, saying the doses might be for the wrong strain of the disease, the agency says.

The health minister says 905 cases have been recorded in seven of the country's eight regions, but mostly in Niamey and Dosso where it is now endemic.

"We have decided to close down schools in the region of Niamey because we have to understand why this strain has become epidemic," Health Minister Mano Aghali told the BBC French service. "What makes the situation worse is that the 'w' strain is now epidemic and that was not the case before," he said.

There is a "meningitis belt" in sub-Saharan Africa, stretching from Senegal to Ethiopia, with high rates of the disease, the WHO says.

PROF M KARIM KHAN

Shoumen (not a real name) is a three years old breast feed baby who is properly vaccinated with a history of age appropriate development. Suddenly he felt sick, presented with high fever, headache, vomiting, lethargy, neck stiffness and convulsion. He was hospitalised immediately. After thorough physical examination lumbar puncture done and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) was obtained for examination in the lab. CSF study confirmed the diagnosis of Meningitis. Shoumen was treated by parental antibiotics for two weeks and then discharged with some advice and asked for follow up after four weeks.

Bacterial meningitis is a serious but common infection of central nervous system. Delay in treatment may end up with various complications and even death. Organisms may affect the brain coverings directly if there is any head injury, fracture, following some diagnostic procedures but mostly it affects brain via blood (hematogenous spread).

Fever, headache, vomiting, neck stiffness and other signs of meningeal irritation, lethargy, convulsion are the dominating features. Early diagnosis and prompt treatment is necessary to minimise morbidity and mortality.



Common complications include hydrocephalus (a medical condition in which there is an abnormal accumulation of CSF in the ventricles of the brain), subdural effusion (collection of fluid trapped between the surface of the brain and the outer lining of the brain called dura matter), brain abscess, cerebral palsy, cranial nerve palsy, deafness, visual problem, mental retardation, epilepsy etc.

Every year more than 1.2 million people are affected by meningitis. Bacterial meningitis is the most severe and common form. Even with prompt diagnosis and treatment,

approximately 1 in 10 patients die and up to 1 in 5 sustain permanent damage and disability.

Meningitis is a disease that can affect anyone, anywhere and at any time but children are the main victims. Breastfeeding, maintaining proper hygiene and vaccination reduces the incidence of the disease.

24th April is observed as World Meningitis Day to create awareness about the disease.

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New oral iron chelator for Thalassaemia

DR MD ABDUR RAHIM

Recently United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Jadenu, a new oral iron chelator formulation for chronic iron overload patients such as Thalassaemia. The new film coated formulation is an improvement over the existing once daily oral iron chelator Deferasirox (available as Asunra in Bangladesh). The tablet can be taken with or without food, will simplify the treatment of chronic iron overload in thalassaemia.

Thalassaemia is a life-threatening anemia in children which is inherited genetically. These patients survive by taking blood transfusion at 2-4 weeks regular interval. Blood is a rich source of iron and its regular transfusion causes iron toxicity in the body.

In the past, living with Thalassaemia had been as distressful as it could be due to the painful daily treatment with injection Desferal (desferrioxamine) to reduce the iron overload resulting from regular blood transfusion. Desferal must be taken subcutaneously with a portable syringe pump over 8-12 hours. Needless to say, a child suffering for Thalassaemia dreaded it the most because it is a daily procedure and often produced a tender swelling on the skin.

The treatment became much less troublesome with introduction of oral iron chelators. However, the oral chelators are also associated with significant treatment burden and side effects.

The new formulation is believed to improve the compliance of the patients as it can be taken any time of the day without concern of food.

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