

One child dies of pneumonia every 39 seconds!

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Pneumonia – a preventable disease – kills more children than any other infection. Pneumonia claimed the lives of more than 800,000 children under the age of five last year, or one child every 39 seconds, according to a new analysis.

Most deaths occurred among children under the age of two, and almost 153,000 within the first month of life.

Sounding the alarm about this forgotten epidemic, six leading health and children's organisations launched an appeal for global action.

In January the group will host world leaders at the Global Forum on Childhood Pneumonia in Spain.

Pneumonia is caused by bacteria, viruses or fungi, and leaves children fighting for breath as their lungs fill with pus and fluid.

More children under the age of five died from the disease in 2018 than from any other. 437,000 children under five died due to diarrhoea and 272,000 to malaria.

Children with immune systems weakened by other infections like HIV or by malnutrition, and those living



in areas with high levels of air pollution and unsafe water, are at far greater risk.

The disease can be prevented with vaccines, and easily treated with low-cost antibiotics if properly diagnosed.

But tens of millions of children are still going unvaccinated – and one in three with symptoms do not receive essential medical care.

Children with severe cases of pneumonia may also require oxygen treatment, which is rarely available in the poorest countries to the children who need it.

In Bangladesh, pneumonia claimed the lives of more than 12,000 children under five, which is more than 1 child every hour. 13 percent of child deaths were due to pneumonia in 2018.

The under-five mortality rate in 2019 is 40 per 1000 live births. Inequality, poverty and lack of access to health services contributes to 49 deaths per 1000 live births among the poorest households compared with just 28 deaths per 1000 live births amongst the richest households in 2019.

Although Bangladesh has over 97% PVC3, DTP3 and Hib3 coverage among 1-year-olds, the country spends just \$6 per person on health care in 2016, far below the \$86 minimum level recommended by the World Health Organisation.

Dr Seth Berkley, CEO of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, said, "The fact that this preventable, treatable and easily diagnosed disease is still the world's biggest killer of young children is frankly shocking. We have made strong progress over the last decade, with millions of

children in the world's poorest countries now receiving the lifesaving pneumococcal vaccine. Thanks largely to Gavi's support, pneumococcal vaccine coverage in low-income countries is now higher than the global average, but we still have work to do to ensure every child has access to this lifesaver."

Funding available to tackle pneumonia lags far behind other diseases. Only 3% of current global infectious disease research spending is allocated to pneumonia, despite the disease causing 15% of deaths in children under the age of five.

In a joint call to action, the organisations urged: Governments in the worst-affected countries to develop and implement Pneumonia Control Strategies to reduce child pneumonia deaths; and to improve access to primary health care as part of a wider strategy for universal health coverage; Richer countries, international donors and private sector companies to boost immunisation coverage by reducing the cost of key vaccines and ensuring the successful replenishment of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; and to increase funding for research and innovation to tackle pneumonia.

HEALTH APP

Diabetes treatment guideline and diabetes journey app launched

With a view to improving quality of treatment, the country's first government recognised diabetes treatment guideline has been launched recently. "Diabetes Care BADAS Guideline 2019" was prepared jointly by Diabetic Association of Bangladesh (BADAS) and Non-Communicable Diseases Control Programme of Directorate General of Health Services.

Additionally, to introduce digital approach in healthcare and empower physicians, an application-based treatment approach, Diabetes Journey was also launched. The app was launched jointly by BADAS and Novo Nordisk based on the new diabetes treatment guideline.

This guideline will help to model and standardise the treatment outline of the diabetic patients, and will ensure optimal control for better outcome, said Professor Dr A K Azad Khan, President of BADAS.

The diabetes journey app will empower the physicians to take effective treatment decisions based on patients' types and needs, Dr Khan said.

BADAS aims to transform diabetes care in Bangladesh so that patients can have access to quality care and better health, said Md Sayef Uddin, General Secretary of BADAS.

As a global leader in diabetes care, Novo Nordisk has taken many initiatives to introduce digital approach in healthcare, said Anand Shetty, Managing Director of Novo Nordisk.

The diabetes journey application and the country's first national diabetes patients' registry are few examples of digitalisation in Bangladesh and aligned with the government's vision for "Digital Bangladesh", Shetty said.

HEALTH bulletin



Hypertension treatment tied to lower risk for Dementia, Alzheimer's

Antihypertensive treatment is associated with lower risk for dementia in older adults with high blood pressure, a meta-analysis in the *Lancet Neurology* finds.

Researchers combined data from six prospective studies comprising over 30,000 adults aged 55 and older who were dementia-free at baseline. During a median follow-up of 7 to 22 years, roughly 3,700 developed dementia, nearly half of whom developed Alzheimer disease.

Among participants with hypertension, those who used any antihypertensive agent had a 12% lower risk for dementia and a 16% lower risk for Alzheimer's relative to those not using antihypertensives. No antihypertensive class emerged as superior to others.

Antihypertensive treatment was not associated with reduced dementia risk among participants with normal or pre-hypertensive blood pressure. This group probably included patients with well-controlled hypertension.

Commentators say that with these data, taken together with other analyses, "there is now persuasive evidence for a beneficial effect of blood pressure lowering on cognitive function from treatment initiated in midlife."

World Diabetes Day 2019

DR SHAHJADA SELIM

Every year World Diabetes Day takes place on the 14th November. It has grown from humble beginnings to become a globally-celebrated event which increases awareness about diabetes. The day is internationally recognised and is an official United Nations Day.

The International Federation of Diabetes (IDF) declares the theme for every one or two year. The theme for diabetes awareness month and World Diabetes Day 2018-2019 is The Family and Diabetes.

IDF is raising awareness of the impact that diabetes has on the family and support network of those affected, and promoting the role of the family in the management, care, prevention and education of diabetes.

Families are urged to learn more about the warning signs of

diabetes and find out their risk of type 2 diabetes. IDF found four-in-five parents would have trouble recognising the warning signs. One-in-three would not spot them at all. These alarming findings pushed IDF to attract the family concern to combat diabetes.

The findings underline the need for education and awareness to help people spot the diabetes warning signs early. The lack of knowledge on diabetes means that spotting the warning signs is not just a problem for parents, but is an issue impacting a cross-section of society. This is a major concern, due to the signs being milder in type 2 diabetes, the most prevalent form of the condition, responsible for around 90% of all diabetes.

One in two people currently living with diabetes are undiagnosed. The vast majority of these have type 2 diabetes.

If left untreated or unmanaged, diabetes can lead to life-changing complications. These include blindness, amputation, kidney failure, heart attack and stroke. Diabetes was responsible for four million deaths in 2017.

On eve of the day, IDF is trying create huge awareness to attract the authorities, diabetes care givers, patients with diabetes and their well wishers to initiate diabetes prevention programmes, conduct own surveys/ research, mobilise resources, engage the educational means and implement the healthy life style facilities.

This is very much pertinent for Bangladesh to take appropriate steps to prevent and manage diabetes.

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Expanding access to life-saving treatment for diabetes

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recently announced the start of a pilot programme to prequalify human insulin to increase treatment for diabetes in low- and middle-income countries.

About 65 million people with type 2 diabetes need insulin, but only half of them are able to access it, largely due to high prices. All people with type 1 diabetes need insulin to survive.

Insulin prequalification can lead to lower prices

WHO prequalification of insulin is expected to boost access by increasing the flow of quality-assured products on the international market, providing countries with greater choice and patients with lower prices.

Despite an ample supply, insulin prices are currently a barrier to treatment in most low- and middle-income countries. Three manufacturers control most of the global market for insulin, setting prices that are prohibitive for many people and countries.

Access to insulin a challenge in many countries

Data collected by WHO in 2016-2019 from 24 countries on four continents showed that human insulin was available only in 61% of health facilities and analogue insulins in 13%. The data showed that a month's supply of insulin would cost a worker in Accra, Ghana, the equivalent of 5.5 days of pay per month, or 22% of his/her earnings.

In wealthy countries, people often have to ration insulin, which can be deadly for people who do not get the right quantity of the medicine.

More than 420 million people live with diabetes. Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death and a major cause of costly and debilitating complications such as heart attacks, stroke, kidney failure, blindness and lower limb amputations.

People with type 1 diabetes need insulin for survival and to maintain their blood glucose at levels to reduce the risk of common complications such as blindness and kidney failure. People with type 2 diabetes need insulin for controlling blood glucose levels to avoid complications when oral medicines become less effective as the illness progresses.



World Antibiotic Awareness Week aims to increase awareness of global antibiotic resistance and to encourage best practices among the general public, health workers and policy makers to avoid the further emergence and spread of antibiotic resistance.



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