

Health Ministry along with UNICEF launched its campaign to fight Hepatitis B

24 November 2015 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

Health Ministry along with UNICEF launched its campaign to fight Hepatitis B



Ministry of Health and Family Welfare along with UNICEF kick started a campaign to eradicate Hepatitis B from the country with Amitabh Bachchan as the goodwill ambassador here in Mumbai on Monday.

The event which launched awareness videos was inaugurated by J P Nadda, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare. While Deepak Sawant, state health minister, expressed the commitment of Maharashtra government towards the campaign, Louis Georges Arsenault, UNICEF Representative to India, promised its support to fight with Hepatitis B.

Of the 26 million infants born every year in India, approximately 1 million run the life time risk of developing chronic HBV carriers. In India, introduction of HBV vaccine was pilot-tested in 14 cities and 33 districts in 2002-03; extended to ten states in 2007-08 and the immunization was expanded to the entire country in 2011-12. Government of India has included HBV vaccine in the National universal immunization program in the entire country in 2011-12.

The Pentavalent vaccine that included hepatitis B and Haemophilus influenzae in addition to diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus was initially tried in a pilot study in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. After encouraging results, the program was extended to the states of Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Puducherry, and Tamil Nadu. 12 more states were extended in 2014 and rest of states would be covered by the end of 2015.

J P Nadda, Union Health and Family Welfare Minister, said "It is the government's mission to avoid all deaths caused by preventable diseases. Mission Indradhanush targets full immunization coverage to be expanded from 65% to at least 90% children of the country, which includes 7 vaccines for diseases including Hepatitis B. There will be four more vaccines in the list soon. The government with these campaigns wants to ensure the health of a citizen in his full life cycle. We are particularly targeting those are left out and to ensure the quality of vaccines by maintaining the sophisticated cold chains. Indian government is conducting 90 lakh campaigns for immunization and 7 crore vaccine doses are given."

Louis Georges Arsenault, UNICEF Representative to India, said "India as a country has a good track record in immunization

and reaching out people for vaccination, including in the case of Polio. We believe with timely Immunization of children, the country can be made completely free of Hepatitis B very soon. Preventing Hepatitis-B through immunization at birth and the first year of life is critical for the healthy life of a child."