

Action plan to address autism

220. SHRI BAISHNAB PARIDA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) the status of autism disorder in the country *inter-alia* indicating the action plan of Government to control this mental health issue;

(b) the main reasons for this affliction;

(c) whether it is also proposed to set up certain centres in various metros to create awareness to address isolation, intense loneliness especially for the elderly; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. HARSH VARDHAN): (a) There are no large scale studies on prevalence of Autism in India. Autism is a Neuro-developmental disability whose impact can be reduced through early intervention, removing barriers of all nature and facilitating measures for holistic development of the child in an inclusive environment.

National Trust, an autonomous body set up under the “ National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999” is taking a number of steps for creating awareness, diagnosis and early detection/intervention for the persons affected from Autism.

There are a number of hospitals and organizations all over India which are offering diagnostic and treatment services for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). These include NIMHANS, Bangalore; AIIMS New Delhi; PGIMER, Chandigarh; JIPMER, Pudduchery; CIP, Ranchi; LGBRIMH, Tezpur; NIMH, Secunderabad; and AIISH, Mysore. In addition, there are many State Government hospitals and non-governmental organizations that offer diagnostic, medical, psychiatric, counselling education and training services.

(b) There is no known single cause for Autism, but it is generally accepted that it is caused by abnormalities in brain structure or function.

(c) and (d) Under National Mental Health Programme (NMHP), generation of community awareness is a continued activity. Awareness is generated in the community regarding the mental disorders and the availability of mental health services by adopting various mass media and interpersonal communication methods.