

Containing spread of STDs

1872. SHRI AVINASH PANDE: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) what measures are being taken by Government to prevent and contain the spread of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) including, but not limited to HIV/AIDS;

(b) whether any steps have been taken to reach out to the youth in a targeted manner for the dissemination of such information on protection from STDs;

(c) whether Government is planning to introduce, or recommend the introduction of education on sexual health, safe sexual practices and reproductive rights of women in schools for children above the age of puberty; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK) : (a) The Government is implementing National AIDS and STD control programme to prevent spread of STI infection in general population through 1264 Designated STI clinics. These clinics are located at all the district hospitals, medical colleges and select sub district hospitals. The STI patients receive free consultation, testing and drugs for STI treatment. All the STI attendees also receive counselling at these health facilities for preventing future STI infection. For prevention and control of spread of STI infection in high-risk group population, standardized STI management is provided by syndromic case management. All high-risks group populations receive free STI consultation and treatment, quarterly routine medical check-up, and biannual syphilis screening.

A policy decision has also been taken for universal screening of syphilis during pregnancy. Infectious diseases such as syphilis have the potential of being transmitted from mother to child, and also increase the risk of peri-natal and neonatal mortality. In this regard, guidelines have already been disseminated to the States on the steps to be taken for universal syphilis screening and management of these infections once the pregnant woman is found to be positive on the basis of screening test. By effective implementation and universal screening of syphilis, this will go a long way in reducing the burden of syphilis and ultimately eliminate it.

With a view of to expand the access to quality RCH and HIV services, a decision has also been taken for universal screening of HIV in pregnant women. This will help in early identification of HIV cases which will help in early initiation of multiple drug ARV regimens. This will also reduce mother to child transmission to less than 5%.

Apart from the above, prevention efforts in HIV/ AIDS Control Programme includes Targeted Intervention programme for high-risk group population and bridge population (migrants and truckers), preventive initiatives for rural populations, HIV counseling and testing, condom promotion and information, education and communication for raising awareness about prevention and control of spread of HIV/AIDS and STI.

(b) The National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) under its Youth intervention programme is implementing two programmes that specifically cater to Adolescents and Youth. NACO implements Adolescence Education Programme, and Red Ribbon Club Programme that impart information on protection from STDs, along with HIV, through State AIDS Control Societies.

Adolescence Education Programme (AEP): Adolescence Education Programme imparts life skills education to school students. The programme is being implemented in secondary and senior secondary schools to build up life skills of adolescents to cope with physical and psychological changes associated with growing up and to enable them to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS/STI.

Under the programme, sessions are scheduled during the academic year in classes VII, IX and XI for 16 hours. In the module being used for training of teachers, one of the modules is especially dedicated to awareness and protection from STIs/RTIs.

Red Ribbon Clubs (RRCs): To address the vulnerabilities of college going youth age group (15-29), Red Ribbon Clubs are formed in colleges. They encourage peer to peer messaging on HIV prevention, and provide a platform for college going Youth for discussion and clarification of their doubts and myths surrounding HIV/AIDS/STI.

Under Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK), Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics (AFHCs) are established at the Medical Colleges, District and Community Health Centre (CHC) levels. These have, in place, trained service providers as Medical Officers and ANMs; and Counsellors are being trained for providing age appropriate information to adolescent boys and girls on various issues related to adolescent growth and changes occurring during this period.

(c) and (d) NACO is already implementing Adolescence Education programme in schools for spreading awareness and imparting education on sexual health, safe sexual practices in schools for children above the age of puberty.

Under Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram Government of India is planning to provide informal information on physical, mental, social and psychological changes occurring during adolescence through trained service providers and counsellors within the community.