

Kids Health Care is no Child's Play

Rotary is a worldwide family. Rotary sets standards in all sorts of areas that concerns the welfare of the individual. Children's health and future is one of the priority programme of Rotary.

Children are more vulnerable than adults to environmental risks because of a number of factors. Children are constantly growing. They breathe more air, consume more food and drink more water than adults do, in proportion to their weight. Children have little control over their environment. Unlike adults, they may be both unaware of the risks and unable to make choices to protect their health. At certain early stages of development, exposure to environmental toxicants can lead to irreversible damage. Taking care of children is thus a serious task for adults and their health care programmes have to be carefully planned and executed. Polio eradication programme of Rotary is one such avenue in the children's health care initiative.

The problem of malnutrition and infant mortality can be solved if it is addressed at the grassroots level in every city, village or town in India with greater collaboration, consultation and joint action planning with the Ministry of Health. This is what Rotary clubs do. In India, Children's Day which falls on November 14, is a special day for kids. It is a day when we not only remember the late Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, but also reaffirm our faith in the future of the nation that will be carried forward by the children of today. Of India's one billion plus population more than 180 million are between 0-6 years. Economic disparities between the rich and the poor have resulted to shocking hunger and malnutrition rates for large numbers of India's children. A health care delivery system for the children's population of this size needs constant monitoring and administration. The health camp organised by Rotary District 3010 at the MVC School, Malaviya Nagar, New Delhi, had Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad, Minister of Health, Government

of India, Mrs. Kiran Walia, Health Minister, Government of Delhi, PRIP Rajendra K Saboo, RIPN Kalyan Banerjee, additional Secretary and Mission Director, National Rural Health Mission, Mr. K R Pradhan, Joint Secretary Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, Mr. Amit Prasad, representatives from USAID, NPSP-WHO, UNICEF and a host of Rotary volunteers. Polio vaccines were administered to the children below the age of five. The camp had over 700 children participating in it. On this occasion a slum area called the Jagadamba Camp was adopted by the district for providing comprehensive health care and literacy to the children of the camp.

India has exceptional health care, if you can afford it.

But a vast majority of the population cannot afford it and the result is that the parents and the children are prone to a variety of diseases. This is developed into a national crisis. The cornerstone of Rotary Clubs' response to this has been encourage frequent health camps, however small it may be. In rural areas, mothers are encouraged to give birth in hospitals which have

proper health care facilities. This eliminates the risk of maternal mortality and also ensures that the babies get the necessary medical aid after birth.

It is said that healthy children will not fear life if their elders have the sense to provide decent health care to them. Many parents just seem to wait for disaster to happen before they can rush their children to a medical practitioner. This way of dealing with the child's health has to change. This can be done with more advocacy and with more involvement of Rotary Clubs.



*Rtn. Ashok Mahajan
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Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad with the dignitaries at the camp.