

Winning the Battle against Polio

Dear Rotary Leaders,

Polio eradication till today continues to be, one of the subject of paramount importance on the agenda of Rotary International.

Twenty years ago, we made a solemn promise of making the world free of polio - today and in the coming months, we must honour our word and the commitment we made to our children. The day of reckoning has come and if I may add, it is a call of do-or-die for Rotarians.

To date, India has reported 119 (as on 7 March) cases, out of which P3 accounted for 118 (reported mainly in and around U.P and Bihar) and the only P1 case reported in Delhi. In 2007, India made impressive progress towards Polio eradication by implementing strategies on a scale and intensity unprecedented in the history of the campaign. More than 95% of the regions in the country today, remain Polio free. Only Uttar Pradesh and Bihar till date remain endemic to poliovirus. And our National PolioPlus Committee is optimistic about overcoming these remaining gaps in UP and Bihar.

In fact the P1 strain, the most virulent was at its lowest in 2007 and today except for the one reported in Delhi (which again is a migrant case), it has almost disappeared from the virus capital of western Uttar Pradesh (no P1 case for the past more than one year). This achievement is being hailed by Polio experts as the biggest breakthrough in stopping P1 transmission in the country. Though the rise in P3 has been a matter of concern, these experts believe it is a less virulent strain, spreads slowly and hence can be contained in less time.

The control strategy for P3 is already underway and the upcoming immunization round, SNID on 30 March will be with the monovalent mOPV3. This SNID will take place in the States of Delhi, U.P and Bihar, parts of Haryana, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Uttaranchal along with targeting migratory populations in Punjab.

Polio battle is now at its heights in India and the upcoming months are very crucial. Governments, bureaucrats, agencies and partners alike are doing everything in their capacity to eliminate the disease. And

as Indians the onus is on us to lead the way in eradicating this virus from the country and subsequently from the world before we endanger our Polio free states or regions through importation.

Today, immunizing children everywhere with the polio vaccine is the only way to eradicate this disease. I am convinced that, whether it is knocking on doors during house-to-house campaigns or staffing immunization posts, India's Rotary members will be out in force during the SNID campaign to make sure that each and every child is reached with the Polio vaccine.

I hereby appeal Rotary Leaders to spare no effort in making the forthcoming Immunization Day a resounding success.

I look forward to your positive support.

**With warm regards,
Affectionately yours in Rotary,**

**Ashok Mahajan
Director – Rotary International**