

Editorial

Why Anemia Journal?

- Investment in nutrition is crucial to future efforts to improve the health of women, children, and adolescents; the potential human, societal, and economic gains from such investment are substantial.

Anemia is the most underestimated public health problem that affects the global population. If we look at the World Health Organization database surveys and studies from 1993 to 2011, around 1.6 billion people (one-fourth of world population) suffered from anemia; highest prevalence was in preschool children and women of reproductive age from Africa and Southeast Asia (60% from Africa and 40% from Southeast Asia).

If we look at the Indian figures, almost 55% of our population suffers from anemia and every second woman or a girl is a victim of this disease. Of all the forms of anemia, iron deficiency and infectious anemia are most prevalent. If we look at the statistics state wise, Assam is the worst affected state followed by Haryana and Jharkhand. Children below 5 years of age, adolescent girls, and women of reproductive age group are most affected than men in any age group. Once these girls start menstruating, the associated blood loss along with malnutrition makes them more anemic.

The root cause of nutritional deficiencies and other factors leading to anemia is complex and multidimensional. Poverty, underdevelopment, and low socioeconomic status are the main players, along with other social practices. Nutritional deficiency is often aggravated by poor feeding and eating practices for infants and young children along with poor sanitation and hygiene. Poor educational status especially of females, quality health systems, and unavailability of safe drinking water are the other factors for infectious diseases. There is an urgent need for improving overall nutritional status of adolescent girls through nutritional education, community awareness programs, and adequate supplementation. There is also a need to emphasize on regular blood tests to check their hemoglobin levels.

For any society to flourish and thrive, good nutrition is the key, which in turn has its impact on health and cognitive behavior of a person that is vital for academic performance and productivity. It goes without saying that a smart investment in people's good nutrition leads to better productivity that leads to a healthy economy and socioeconomic development. Nutritional education in school curriculum is the need of this hour. Society at large has to be taught about the corrective measures to combat these preventable diseases.

If we improve the nutritional status of women throughout all her stages of life, we in turn will get a healthy family and a healthy society. To achieve this, the government and society must join forces and make nutrition a top priority by making women of our society empowered and giving them full and equal rights in all the fields, be it financial, social, or technology. This is a mammoth task that requires a range of policies which are being implemented in the right direction and are multisectorial and on a larger scale to achieve universal coverage.

Though India was the first country to launch the National Nutritional Anemia Prophylaxis Program in 1970 and there are several supplementary nutritional programs running at central and state levels, we could not leave an impact on its prevention worldwide, and if we believe the recent studies, anemia is on the rise. If we look at the causes of anemia, most of them are preventable (nutritional deficiency and infections). The most probable reason of this failure is lack of sensitivity toward the socioeconomic and political factors, leading to anemia in women. The way this program has been implemented, it leaves a wide gap between toddlers to pregnant women, with no attention to adolescents, and at the same time, proper awareness programs of importance of a good nutrition for a woman and a girl child were not taken care of. The interstate differences should also be kept in mind while implementing awareness programs. The Federation of Obstetric & Gynecological Societies of India in 2008 launched a 365 days 24x7 anemia "Bhagoo" program and trials were done for single-shot intravenous iron therapy in pregnancy.

The need of this journal has been felt to educate our fraternity as gynecologists are the people who come into maximum contact with a girl from her early years before she is married and preparing to have a baby. Looking at the magnitude of the problem, a regular upgradation of their knowledge to recognize the symptoms on time and treat it will save lots of wastage of human work hours and our financial resources. A gynecologist is the best person to guide and counsel the society as there is an intergenerational cycle of malnutrition. For example, an adolescent girl who has been neglected about her nutritional needs becomes a woman who is anemic; when this woman gets married and conceives she will have a low birth weight baby who in turn is more prone to develop wasting (muscles and body weight) and stunting (short height). This baby will also be at higher risk of morbidity and mortality and

of developing noncommunicable diseases later in life. Our aim through this journal which is totally dedicated to anemia is to teach screening for anemia, treatment of anemia in women and girls before they reach adolescence, and educate the society about various food fortification programs so that they can build a good iron reserve.

- Specific actions are needed to improve the quality of the diet; to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding; to ensure that everyone has access to essential nutrition actions; to provide adequate water and sanitation; and to provide information and education.



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