

Awareness about Neglected Tropical Parasitic Diseases: Need of the Hour

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Neglected tropical parasitic diseases involve various parasitic diseases which commonly occur in developing tropical nations of Asia, Africa and the America. The parasitic and bacterial diseases identified as being neglected are among some of the most common infections in the estimated 2.7 billion people who live on less than \$2 per day. In totality, the neglected tropical diseases result in approximately 534,000 deaths annually. These diseases occur primarily in rural areas and in some poor urban settings of low-income countries. The most common contributory factors for the dissemination of the diseases include unhygienic environment, contaminated food and water consumption, overcrowding, lacking awareness in the masses about the transmission of the infection, uncontrolled population of stray and semi-domesticated animals in close proximity to human dwellings and lack of medical and veterinary attention etc. Being the second most populous country in the world, India is the world leader in total number of cases for the major tropical diseases. The neglected tropical diseases render in poverty and long term disability. The precipitating factors for poverty include long term illnesses due to infections, reduced productive capacity, teratological effects during pregnancy and impaired childhood growth and development due to the diseases. There are a number of parasitic diseases listed under the category including: cystic echinococcosis, trypanosomosis, leishmaniosis, onchocercosis, schistosomosis, cysticercosis, teaniosis and soil transmitted helminthosis. The diseases result in huge economic losses as cystic echinococcosis alone results in losses of USD 212.35 million in India due to condemnation of liver and lungs of the infected small ruminants. The impact of these neglected tropical diseases further substantiates with the fact that a number of these diseases are emerging and re-emerging in certain parts of the world. In order to curtail the losses associated with the parasitic diseases, the most suitable measure which should be adopted includes community awareness about the etiological agents and disease transmission. In order to restrict the global burden of neglected tropical diseases more cutting-edge public health policies and researches are required. One health approach is the most appropriate weapon

and involves the participation of veterinary, medical, zoological and environmental management sectors. A number of the parasitic diseases in question are zoonotic and the role of education and awareness about the zoonoses is well documented. The veterinarians and medicos could be considered as flag-bearers and potential education providers to the communities in contact. The early control of the diseases thus require quick surveillance, early diagnosis and treatment and control of vectors.

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