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Mission Eradicate Hepatitis

On World Hepatitis Day, several city-based NGOs teamed up with United Way of Mumbai to reach out to various communities to alert them about the dangers of hepatitis

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For many years now, Hepatitis B and C have posed a threat to Indians. A WHO report released in 2015 suggested that approximately 4–6 crore Indians are carriers of hepatitis B virus. The report also suggested that 2–5 per cent of India's population may suffer from the virus; numbers say that approximately one lakh people die from hepatitis B and C every year in India.

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“The fundamental problem is that most people aren't aware of the threats posed by the hepatitis virus. People don't take it as seriously as the HIV virus; they do not realise that hepatitis is more fatal as the virus is able to manifest faster in our systems,” explained Anil Parmar, Senior Manager, Community Investment, United Way of Mumbai.

A week-long affair

While World Hepatitis Day falls on July 28, United Way of Mumbai is conducting a week-long session to make people aware of the dangers of the virus. “During the week, we will conduct sterilisation, testing and vaccination of commercial sex workers for hepatitis B. We will be working with four NGOs, Prerna, India 800, Social Activities Integration (SAI) and Kranti, as they have expertise in health outreach work among sex workers and their families,” said Parmar, adding that the drive aims at reaching out to over 500 sex workers and their children.

A one-day workshop

Saturday, July 30, will see an interactive session with members of the LGBTQ community. “We will have experts from the field of haepatology giving presentations and conducting voluntary testing and vaccinations as well. This programme will be conducted in association with NGOs such as Humsafar Trust, Yaariyan, Umang, Gay Bombay, Aarju Foundation, Gaurav and Humsaaya Trust and we aim to impact 300 members,” added Parmar.

Meeting schools and colleges

Of course, the biggest concern regarding hepatitis is the lack of knowledge regarding the virus. To address this, several health activists in the city conduct general health camps for school children. In addition, college students, who belong to National Service Scheme, are mobilised and trained in explaining the dangers of the disease to fellow college students and people living in the neighbourhood.


Biggest concerns today

The WHO report criticised India's approach in tackling hepatitis B, after conducting a global survey of nations and their policies on raising awareness and partnerships, steps to prevent transmission, as well as taking adequate care for screening and treatment. The report also points out that India still needs to develop an established goal


to eliminate hepatitis B and C.

However, in the past few years, the government has been doing its bit to fight the disease under its project 'Indradhanush' where it stresses on the importance of vaccinations in pregnant women as well as children. While it may not be possible to meet the WHO demand to eradicate hepatitis B and C by 2020, steps are being taken in the right direction to make people aware of the dangers of this disease.


WORLD HEPATITIS DAY SPECIAL

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