

NOTIFYING TB

Tuberculosis was made a notifiable disease in May 2012. Now the Central TB Division has set out guidelines on how to notify cases. It is imperative on all private and public sector laboratories, hospitals/clinics/nursing homes and individual practitioners to report cases. All cases diagnosed or treated since April 2012 may be notified. The notification may be sent by hard copy, email, mobile phones or it may be uploaded directly on to the Nikshay portal (<http://nikshay.gov.in>). Alternatively nodal officers may be contacted on (<http://tbcindia.nic.in>). New cases, recurrence and treatment failures all need to be reported as well as details of rifampicin resistance. Personal details of the patient including name, address, phone number and unique identification number are also to be provided. Public health staff will extend support system for treatment initiation, adherence, follow up, default retrieval and contact tracing even if they are outside the national TB control program. This ambitious project will allow a continuous real time monitoring of disease trends. TB control is a gargantuan task but monitoring is the foundation of good public health strategy. It sounds simplistic and naïve, but things get done only if you do them (*The Hindu 27 September 2012*).

ROUTING OUT RABIES

India has the dubious distinction of accounting for more deaths due to rabies than any other country. Data from the 'Million Death Study' to be published in PLOS, show that three quarter of them are in the 7 states of Chhattisgarh, UP, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Assam and Madhya Pradesh. Annual deaths due to rabies are about 17,000 to 20,000. The Government has made it a priority disease for control in the 12th Five Year Plan. As of now, India does not have a comprehensive national rabies control program. In the Americas, mass vaccination of dogs and treatment of people lead to an 80% decline in rabies incidence over 10 years. But India with its huge number of dogs will need a slightly different strategy. Besides vaccinating street dogs, limiting their breeding potential by sterilizing them will also need to be done. In the 12th Five Year Plan, all 35 states/UT will

be covered for the human component but animal component will be stressed in 30 cities. Hopefully this new program will have both bark as well as bite (*The Hindu 28 September 2012*).

THE NEW DISABILITIES BILL

Disability groups were united in roundly denouncing the last draft of the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities Bill. So the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has now come up with fresh draft legislation. Importantly it does away with the plenary guardianship system where the guardian took all legally binding decisions for the disabled person. Now there will be a limited guardianship system where decisions will be made jointly on mutual understanding and trust. Persons with disabilities will enjoy equal legal capacity on all fronts including owning and inheriting property and control of all financial affairs. Local authorities will take all measures to protect them from torture or inhuman treatment. It bars any medical procedure that could lead to infertility without their free and informed consent. All establishments will provide medical and life insurance on an equal basis with other employees. Children between 6-18 years will have right to free education and 5% of seats will be reserved for them in higher education institutions that receive government grants (*The Hindu 1 October 2012*).

THE RAJASTHAN MODEL

October 2nd 2012 marked the completion of one year of the Rajasthan Government's highly successful plan of providing free generic medicines in the state. More than 400 medicines and surgical items were provide free through 1200 Government run hospitals and health centers. Addition of 200 more medicines are in the pipeline. The next plan is to introduce diagnostic tests. Computerization of the distribution centers as well a helpline to provide information about generic drugs has also been started. Rajasthan has shown courage and imagination in implementing an important component of universal health care and deserves admiration and felicitation (*The Hindu 3 October 2012*).

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