

SEMINAR ON HEALTH FOR ALL

Members of the World Health Organisation have pledged to work together to achieve the goal of Alma Ata declaration to which India is a signatory. Despite vast knowledge and capacity in so many spheres in India, we are unable to reach out to all people due to financial and other reasons like want of will power and organisational technique.

Break-through in family planning is vital to achieve the Alma Ata Declaration.

A simple approach could solve many a complex problem with the involvement of the community. The Government has a lot of responsibility for the health of the people as much as the people themselves who have the right and duty to take an active part in fulfilling this task. Citizens from every walk of life could play a vital role.

Families, communities, Government and non-Governmental agencies should associate themselves with one another for the success of this programme. Without the political will, a committed bureaucracy and dedicated involvement of the people, health for all will only remain a dream. Those who possess health and knowledge about health should share with others why education concerning the prevailing health problem and methods of prevention and control is the basic requirement of a community. The public should take an active part by insisting on acceptable standards of hygiene in and around their homes and in public places, to make drinking water safer or to protect it from pollution, space the arrival of new babies in such a way as to give every one of them a good chance of survival, reasonable education and quality of life. Citizens should

also co-operate with the Governmental agencies in fighting disease like malaria—example insecticide spraying. Parents can ensure that children are immunised against infectious diseases and taught to recognise serious condition of ill health.

Mothers and health workers should understand that diarrhea is an illness and that the dehydration it causes, can kill children. Increased use of oral hydration therapy in developing countries has already saved countless lives. Oral hydration therapy itself is merely a term used for replacing fluids and body salts lost during attacks of diarrhea. In the long run, prevention must be the goal—safer drinking water, better sanitation, better food handling and better personal and environmental hygiene. The idea that should catch up is the covering of food for sale in the market and in open spaces.

Breast feeding for infants has to be encouraged on a regular basis. The community midwives should arrange food demonstration classes and keep weight charts of babies, so that the mother could observe the difference in the weight of her baby. Health of the family is the key to that of the community.

Disposal of the night soil by providing sink pit toilets and a large number of well distributed and maintained community pay toilets in towns and cities is mandatory to improve personal and community hygiene, in addition to aesthetic benefit.

Creating awareness about proper sanitation, right from the kindergarten level would go a long way as prophylaxis against many illnesses. Simple education regarding proper sanitation should be included as a chapter in regular text-books.

Teachers should enforce stringent standards of cleanliness in the school grounds as well as for personal hygiene of the pupils. Compulsory medical check-up in schools, colleges, industries, hospitals and public places for detection of diseases must be taken up on a war footing. Visits by a medical team for “on the spot” diagnosis; of referral of suspected cases of communicable disease should be notified to the medical personnel. Health should be regarded as highly prized and cherished commodity. Motivation and effective communication on health education are interdependent and

complementary to each other. Health information should flow not only through written words of mass media and talks on radio, television, etc., but also through communications in families, schools, factories, offices and public gatherings, etc. Orientation of health education should include not only on how to remain healthy but also what should be done when health begins to fail.

The problem of community health does not only relate to the developing countries. The health situation in developed countries is changing faster than medical professionals often realise. People in affluent countries should rise to their health responsibilities by eating wisely, drinking moderately smoking not at all, driving carefully, taking enough exercise and helping one another by living in harmony under the stress of city life.

When major communicable diseases are becoming mostly things of the past, doctors will have to learn how to take care of healthy people and show them how to get the most out of life from childhood to a healthy old age. The new role of a doctor will have to be that of a health communicator, backed-up with the best information, modern technology can provide.

