



BLISS



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We meet every alternate Thursday at THE ANTELOPE, 3, Ho Chi Minh Sarani, Kolkata - 700071 at 8.00 pm.		
Rtn Subasish Halder President	Rtn Swapnamita Roy Secretary	Rtn Sukanta Khan Treasurer
		PP Rtn Chandra Kumar Paul Editor

PREVENTING CERVICAL CANCER THROUGH VACCINATIONS

Posted on January 4, 2024

By Dr. Amal El-Sisi, Technical Coordinator for Maternal and Child Health, The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers and honorary program director of "United to End Cervical Cancer in Egypt"



Three years ago, I was talking to a mother in my clinic confused by the contradictory messages she was hearing about the HPV (human papilloma virus) vaccine. On the one hand, she had heard about the effectiveness of the vaccine to guard against cervical cancer. On the other hand, she had also heard about the stigma surrounding the vaccine – a stigma related to sexual promiscuity.

Cervical cancer, the fourth most common cancer among women, is caused by HPV, a sexually transmitted infection. Cervical cancer is preventable through vaccination, screening, and treatment, but faces stigma, even among medical professionals, due to religious and cultural norms.

I am not a community (i.e., preventive) pediatrician; my practice is mainly in hospitals with acutely ill children. However, I was intrigued by this mother's story. It brought back memories for me of when I was living in another country and my daughter had received the HPV vaccine. If we had lived in Egypt at the time, she might not have received it. It is unfair that circumstances control the health status of many people around the globe. Health equity is a must.

As a Rotarian and health professional, I feel it is my duty to spread awareness and do good in the world. I surveyed fellow pediatricians at a pediatric conference I regularly attend. Only 5% of respondents said they prescribed and recommended the vaccine to their patients. The situation was no better among obstetricians.

I learned that 145 countries are vaccinating girls, protecting them from cervical cancer. Further more 80 of these countries are vaccinating gender neutral – both boys and girls – to protect from different cancers. On further exploration of the problem, we found out that there are many challenges. The HPV vaccine is not part of recommended vaccination by pediatricians and obstetricians in Egypt. In addition, ignorance, stigma, and the fact that they are often not endorsed by health care providers keeps many people in Egypt from getting the vaccination.

I am but one person and I have a mission. As Rotary members, we are a village, and we are more powerful.

We started to include HPV and cervical cancer awareness in all our medical convoys –teams of medical professionals led by Rotary clubs who travel to remote areas to provide consultations and prescribe medications. We urged other Rotary clubs to do the same and have since led 20 convoys to different parts of Egypt. We started awareness campaigns among Egyptian Rotarians (2,900 members) and Rotaractors (600 members) and conducted 40 Rotary awareness events. Most Rotarians in Egypt are now well informed. Furthermore, we now have a group of 80 advocates made up of health professionals and dedicated Rotarians who we call the "Cervical Cancer Champions."

We have also partnered with societies of cancer survivors and held two awareness events. One was a recreative trip to Hurghada. Hoda Galal, a Rotarian and survivor of cervical cancer, shared her story. "My personal goal is to share my story and become a 'Pillar' of hope to someone else, knowing that I have the power to help eradicate cervical cancer mortality rates and make a difference," she said.

The events aren't just about letting people know about early cancer screening tests, they are also about dispelling the stigma attached to this kind of cancer. As conservative as our society is, we carry provincial attitudes and mores regarding the female reproductive system. We as advocates are adamant to break down barriers. These stigmas can lend a hand in the disproportionate amount of needless suffering due to this cancer.



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Environment

We applied for and were awarded a US\$2 million Programs of Scale grant by The Rotary Foundation and other funding agencies. We will use the award to reach 4 million people with awareness campaigns, distribute 32,000 vaccines to girls ages 12-15, and screen 10,000 women for cervical cancer. We are determined to pave the way for the government to implement a national immunization program.

I have spent so much time advocating for the HPV vaccine because I believe we can eradicate HPV-related cancers through vaccination.

I love that the Rotary community aligns with my passion to reach as many people as possible and that members around the world are advocating for the elimination of cervical cancer.

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Mosquito Net Distribution Project "PROTIRODH" undertaken by RCCNE on 28th July at Simla Byayam Samity. 50 Mosquito nets were distributed to under privileged persons to fight the menace of Dengue.

Minutes of the 1604th Meeting of Rotary Club of Calcutta North East held at The Antelope, 3, Ho Chi Minh Sarani, Kolkata - 700071 on 25.07.24 at 8.00 PM.

- ❖ President Rtn Subasish Halder called the meeting to order, followed by the National Anthem by led by PP Rtn Haraprasad Garg.
- ❖ President informed about an upcoming project at Hojagarh Primary School, Hooghly. He visited the school with Treasurer Rtn Sukanta Khan and Rtn Sabyasachi Roy. The school authorities requested the sanitization needs of the students and for Water Filter and the budget is approx. Rs. 25,000/-.
- ❖ President announced the next project on Independence Day on 15th August 2024 at Kashipur Boys High School, Treasurer Rtn Sukanta Khan will initiate the arrangements for tiffin and gifts for 70 kids, which will be donated by PP Rtn Shubadip Roy. Flag hosting program on 15th August 2024 will be held at this school along with felicitation of the teachers.
- ❖ With monsoon in full swing in Kolkata, many places in and around the city have been waterlogged. The stagnant water is the breeding ground for the mosquitoes that causes deadly diseases like Dengue and Malaria. In association with Simla Byayam Samity planning to conduct "Project PROTIRODH" wherein a Dengue Awareness program will be organised, along with distribution of 50 pcs Mosquito Nets.
- ❖ Planning to visit RCC Kakinara on 28th August 2024.
- ❖ President informed that the formation of the screening committee for Admission of new member will be discussed at the next Board Meeting.
- ❖ Then, Club Secretary Rtn Swapnamita Roy conducted the secretarial business. The next Regular Meeting will be held on 8th August 2024.
- ❖ President terminated the meeting with no other agenda left.

Birthday Greetings

08 Aug : Rtn Chandra Sekhar Ghosh

14 Aug : Suhrita Choudhuri, W/o Rtn Biswajit Choudhuri

15 Aug : Suvankhi, D/o Rtn Shubadip Roy

16 Aug : Ranvir, S/o Rtn Gurmeet Singh Sachar

21 Aug : Joyjit, S/o Rtn Biswajit Saha

21 Aug : Shelly Sachar, W/o Rtn Gurmeet Singh Sachar

Wedding Greetings

13 Aug : Rtn Chandra Sekhar & Nilima Ghosh

15 Aug : Rtn Sujit & Indrani Dutt

15 Aug : Rtn Shubadip & Sohini Roy

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