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Lymphatic Filariasis

Published On: 11-02-2023

Why is in news? Ministry of Health & Family Welfare launches nationwide Sarva Dawa Sevan or Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis (LF)

India has ramped up efforts in **eliminating Lymphatic Filariasis a Vector Borne Disease** caused by Culex mosquitoes which causes disability well ahead of global targets to safeguard communities from disability, social and economic insecurity.

The Ministry of Health has launched a nationwide **Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign** aimed at ending disease transmission through the door-to-door administration of anti-filarial drugs, especially in 10 filaria affected states.

This launch comes a month after the program received resounding support from the Union Health Minister to **eliminate Filariasis by 2027, three years ahead of the global target.**

Lymphatic filariasis, commonly known as **elephantiasis**, is a **neglected tropical disease.**

Infection occurs when **filarial parasites are transmitted to humans through mosquitoes.** Infection is usually acquired in childhood causing hidden damage to the lymphatic system.

Lymphatic filariasis impairs the lymphatic system and can lead to the **abnormal enlargement of body parts**, causing pain, severe disability and social stigma.

Lymphatic filariasis is caused by infection with parasites classified as **nematodes (roundworms)** of the family **Filariodidea**. There are 3 types of these **thread-like filarial worms**: **Wuchereria bancrofti**, which is responsible for 90% of the cases, **Brugia malayi**, which causes most of the remainder of the cases, **Brugia timori**, which also causes the disease.

Lymphatic filariasis is **transmitted by different types of mosquitoes** for example by the **Culex mosquito**, widespread across urban and semi-urban areas, **Anopheles**, mainly found in rural areas, and **Aedes**, mainly in endemic islands in the Pacific.

Around 863 million people in 47 countries worldwide remain threatened by lymphatic filariasis and require preventive chemotherapy to stop the spread of this parasitic infection.

Lymphatic filariasis can be **eliminated by stopping the spread of infection through preventive chemotherapy** with safe medicine combinations repeated annually. More than 8.6 billion cumulative treatments have been delivered to stop the spread of infection since 2000.

The WHO recommended **preventive chemotherapy strategy** for lymphatic filariasis elimination is **mass drug administration (MDA)** MDA involves administering an annual dose of medicines to the entire at-risk population.

51 million people were infected as of 2018, a 74% decline since the start of **WHO's Global Programme to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis in 2000.**

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An essential, recommended package of care can alleviate suffering and prevent further disability among people living with disease caused by lymphatic filariasis.

High-burden districts in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh jointly launched the campaign.