

Revised TB control programme has failed, feel experts

A TB death still being reported every minute in the country

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Even as yet another World Tuberculosis Day was observed recently, the economically-backward sections of the society continue to face the wrath of the disease, with a TB death being reported every minute in the country.

Medical experts feel that tuberculosis is not only the most neglected field of medical science, but the campaign to eradicate this menace has also not achieved the desired results. Besides, the adoption of a new treatment regime for curing the disease has also sparked off a debate.

Dr Raman Kakar, a well-known T.B specialist here, who has authored a few books

and produced a documentary film on the subject, has highlighted the basic problems that are still dotting the famous DOTS (Revised National T.B Control Programme) drive of the health department, despite an investment of a huge amount of funds.

In a report titled as 'Are We on Right Track', Dr Kakar has claimed that while the disease has already been reined in by developed nations, the campaign in India has 'failed' miserably due to 'mismanagement' at various levels.

He said that the revised national T.B. Control programme, started in 1998, had exhibited a paradigm shift with five radical changes, which included usage of best drugs and omission of the chest X-Ray test of the infect-

ed person. However, he claimed that the adoption of the thrice-a-week regime, in which medicines ought to be taken only three days a week instead the daily dose routine in practice earlier, might be attractive for many, but the lack of supervision and control could spell disaster in case of unawareness and non-seriousness on part of the patient, which is common in rural parts.

According to him, the omission of chest X-Ray has been a controversial move, while depending only upon 'sputum test' is illogical. It was wrong on part of any physician to prescribe a heavy dose of medicine without confirming presence of the disease with the help of X-Ray images, he claimed.

It is stated that spotting an X-Ray shadow instantly electrifies the doctor to clinch the presence or absence of T.B and without its help, the doctor would be like a blindfolded person. The sputum test only detects 48 per cent of the sick as it does not help in detection of pediatric, extrapulmonary or smear negative T.B. The X-Ray was must after every two months at least for proper supervision, it is claimed. "The second aspect that is marring the anti-TB drive is lack of professionalism, as the proper criteria for the selection of the key person (T.B officer) has been missing and the entire clinical operation appeared non-technical," Dr Kakar claimed. According to experts, while the key DOTS players have been sad-

dled with enormous non-T.B. work, the non-enforcement of the impeccable supervision over thrice-weekly regime can prove catastrophic.

The experts add that a miss on a single day could cause a prolonged gap, which is not compatible with the cure process.

It is believed that the authorities concerned only project superfluous results in a dishonest manner, while the ground reality is different. "All that a patient gets is medicine worth Rs 300 for six months while crores of rupees go waste on lavish meetings and conferences. There is no reason why success is still eluding the programme, despite a lot of amount being spent in the past several years," claimed a physician here.

Tribunal awards Rs 9.5 lakh to

Constable kills wife, self

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two sons, Anil and Sunil, lived on the Phase-II police station campus.

When Ravinder came home on Saturday evening, an argument started between the co-