

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2941
ANSWERED ON:05.09.2007
SPECIAL SCHEME FOR FREE TREATMENT/ MEDICINES
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Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government proposes to formulate a special scheme for providing free treatment and medicines for patients suffering from sickle cell, thalassemia and anaemia diseases;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether any special centers are being set up for diagnosis, treatment and research on these diseases in the country including Nagpur;
- (d) if so, whether the Government is contemplating to provide free medicines to such patients in view of constant need for treatment; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE (SMT. PANABAKA LAKSHMI)

(a) to (e) There is no such proposal. However, under the National Illness Fund, patients in low socio-economic status can seek financial assistance up to Rs.1.00 lakhs. The treatment for Sickle Cell anemia and Thalassemia is available at most of the hospitals. Preventive vaccines are given to protect from various childhood infections. The mainstay of treatment for thalassemia is blood transfusion. Sufficient blood is available in blood banks of various hospitals for this purpose. The Government of India has already given custom duty exemption for the import of both these items. Many Thalassemic Societies are also offering this drug either free or at reduced cost. A new oral chelating drug, Desferiprone manufactured by Cipla and is available in market since 1995 for management of Thalassemia. This drug has reduced the cost of the management by almost 40% and has been considered less expensive and patient compliance is also better. ICMR has recently completed two multicentric studies on Sickle Cell Anemia and Thalassemia with Nagpur, Mumbai and Pune as centres from Maharashtra state in addition to other states. Under this project a simple intervention method to reduce the sickle cell crisis in the affected individuals, which included Folic acid and Fersolate tablets to be given to cases of nutritional anemia and SCD with iron deficiency. Sickle cell anemia patients have been advised to take electrical powder and plenty of fluid during the vasoocclusive crises. A strategy to improve public awareness of Thalassemia, its diagnosis, treatment and prevention will have a significant impact on the burden of the disease in the country as has been done in other countries.