

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:793

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CASES OF AUTISM

Patil Shri Chandrakant Raghunath;Vellaigounder Shri Elumalai

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether cases of autism is on the rise in the country, if so, the details thereof along with the number of such cases reported during each of the last three years and the current year, State/UT-wise;
- (b) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government for the early detection, intervention and treatment of autistic patients in the country;
- (c) whether the Government has conducted any study/ research in this regard, if so, the details and the outcome thereof;
- (d) whether certain cases of autism caused by MMR vaccines have been reported in the country, if so, the details thereof along with the action taken/ proposed to be taken by the Government thereon; and
- (e) the measures being taken by the Government to scale up medical infrastructure and raise the number of specialist doctors for effective management of autistic cases in the country?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI JAGAT PRAKASH NADDA)

(a): Data on Autism, which is a neuro-developmental disorder, is not maintained on a centralised basis.

There are no large scale studies on population prevalence of autism in India. Therefore, it is not possible to estimate the number of individuals affected by autism in India. However, the number of cases of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) seen in Central Government medical settings (AIIMS, New Delhi and NIMHANS, Bangalore) in the country, have reportedly increased. At NIMHANS, the number of inpatient admission cases has increased from 6 cases in 1989 to 97 cases in 2011. In AIIMS, the number of new cases has gone up from 2 to 3 per month during the period 2005-2008 to 7 to 8 per month during the period 2008 till date.

(b): Autism is a neuro-developmental disability for which no definite cure or treatment is available. However, with early detection and intervention it can be managed. Therefore steps have been taken for creating awareness, diagnosis and early intervention.

Under the National Trust Act, 1999, a number of activities are undertaken like care-givers courses, training and public awareness programmes, etc. throughout the country by the registered organizations of the National Trust. Besides, the National Trust, runs several schemes like Samarth (Residential centre), Niramaya (Health Insurance Scheme), Aspiration (Day Care Center), Gyan Prabha (Scholarship Scheme), Uddyam Prabha (Interest Subsidy Scheme), Sahyogi (Caregivers Training Scheme), GHARAUNDA etc. all over the country for the welfare of four disabilities i.e. Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities.

The Rehabilitation Council of India has given accreditation to Centers to run courses for training teachers in the management of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The Government of India has adopted community based care of mentally ill persons under District Mental Health Programme (DMHP). Under DMHP, the State Governments place a mental health team led by a psychiatrist to provide services, training to general health care personnel for identification and treatment of common mental illnesses and conduct IEC activities for awareness.

(c): There are some studies by the Government medical institutions and other organizations on various aspects of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). One such study, partly funded by the National Trust under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, was conducted by the INCLIN Trust for development of a diagnostic tool for autism spectrum disorder (INCLIN-ASD), for early detection of autism amongst children.

In the year 2008, the National Trust (under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment) had conducted a survey in Delhi to estimate the number of persons having one or the other type of mental disability. Based on the data collected during field operation and estimation procedure, it was observed that an estimated number of 36,053 persons in Delhi had one or the other type of disability viz. autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation and multiple disabilities (combination of more than one type of mental disabilities or combination of mental and physical disabilities) which works out to about 0.3 percent of total population of Delhi enumerated during 2001 census. The details are as under:

S. Disability Number of
No. disabled
persons

1 Autism	1470
2 Cerebral Palsy	6600
3 Mental Retardation	17608
4 Multiple Disabilities	10375
Total	36053

(d): No case of autism caused by MMR vaccines has been reported in the country. It has been reported by NIMHANS, Bangalore that extensive research has been conducted all over the world on the association between MMR vaccine and autism and it is now accepted by the scientific community that no association exists between MMR vaccine and autism.

(e): With the objective to address the shortage of qualified mental health professionals in the fields of Psychiatry, Clinical Psychology, Psychiatric Social Work and Psychiatric Nursing in the country, establishment of 11 Centers of Excellence in Mental Health and establishment/ strengthening of 27 Post Graduate (PG) training departments in mental health specialties has been supported during the 11th Five Year Plan period. As a result of implementation of Manpower Development Schemes in the country, a total of 312 new PG seats in mental health specialties have been created in the supported Institutes. Further, a proposal for establishment of 10 additional Centres of Excellence and establishment/ strengthening of 93 PG training departments during the 12th Five Year Plan has been approved.

In addition to the above, Autism has been included under Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) for nationwide coverage for early detection and intervention for autism. Training of health functionaries for the same has been initiated under this programme.