

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3425

ANSWERED ON:01.08.2014

AUTISM AND RELATED DISORDERS

Mahadik Shri Dhananjay Bhimrao;Patil Shri Vijaysinh Mohite;Shinde Dr. Shrikant Eknath

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

- (a) the estimated number of people suffering from autism and related disorders in the country, State/UT-wise;
- (b) whether autism clinics run by various hospitals including the All India Medical Institute of Medical sciences (AIIMS) have reported a sharp rise in cases of autism over the last few years;
- (c) if so, the details thereof and the reasons for this sudden rise in number of autistic patients;
- (d) whether the Government has conducted any study/survey in this regard and if so, the details and the outcome thereof; and
- (e) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government for effective treatment of people suffering from autism and related disorders in the country?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. HARSH VARDHAN)

(a) to (c): Data on Autism, which is a neuro developmental disorder, is not maintained on a centralized 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 have 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.

The reasons for this rise in number are not clear. The exact reasons for occurrence of autism are not known. However, researches in the recent years have revealed that there is genetic basis for this condition. Environmental factors such as adverse influences on brain development before, during or after birth have been implicated in the causation of ASD. These include, inter-alia, prenatal infections (for e.g. maternal rubella infection in early pregnancy), exposure to harmful substances (teratogens) such as valproate and severe birth asphyxia. The rise in the number of autistic patients may also be partially attributed to the increased awareness about Autism Spectrum Disorders.

(d): 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.No. Disability Number of disabled persons

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

(e): 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 caregivers courses, training and public awareness programmes etc. Awareness Programmes are being conducted throughout the country by the registered organizations of the National Trust.

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.

National Trust, under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 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.