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Indian Immunologicals looks at tapping JE market

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Japanese Encephalitis (JE) is a major debilitating disease affecting thousands of people across India each year. Expert study from 1978-2011 reveals that, India had 1, 25,030 cases of Japanese Encephalitis as against Nepal which reports 40,431 cases. Now with an eye on the market and putting across the latest research trends across medical fraternity, Indian Immunologicals which has a JE vaccine in pipeline, recently initiated an awareness campaign on the disease with a seminar for over 100 doctors in Delhi on February 15, 2013. Present on the occasion was Dr Nagabhushana Rao, an international clinical expert on Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES), Japanese encephalitis and epidemic brain attacks.

Dr Rao presented his research findings at the event. Dr Rao's study stated that many states and union territories of India have witnessed cases of AES but have not yet reported. The states that did not report AES were Arunachal Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalya, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim and Tripura. Union Territories of India that did not report AES were Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu and Pondicherry.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Rao said, "Japanese encephalitis is a leading cause of viral encephalitis in Asia with 30,000-50,000 clinical cases reported annually. In India 3,803 cases of Japanese encephalitis were reported in 2012, the deadly virus has so far claimed 674 lives. There were a maximum of 1,169 deaths due to the virus in 2011, 679 in 2010 and 774 in 2009. Uttar Pradesh had the maximum of 579 deaths in 2011, while Assam had reported 250 deaths and Bihar 197."

The seminar also highlighted about other emerging infectious diseases by eminent medical speakers such as Dr Durga Madhav Sathpathy, professor from Bhubhaneshwar Medical College and an expert on Rabies; and Dr Mahaveer Jain, a leading pediatrician and former secretary of Indian Association of Pediatricians.

During the seminar, Dr Rao reported that JE is found mainly from Assam, Bihar, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh which account for approximately 80 percent of cases and deaths with a case fatality rate ranging from 20 to 25 percent. Dr Rao suggested that vaccination against JE needed to continue, as it was a mainly a rural phenomenon, amplified by biological agents such as pigs, ducks, and mosquitoes which cannot be eliminated.