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IRCS opens thalassemia screening and counselling centre

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India has the largest number of children with Thalassemia major in the world



Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare inaugurated a Thalassemia Screening and Counselling Centre at Indian Red Cross Society's National Headquarters (IRCS NHQ) Blood Bank, in New Delhi recently.

The Union Health Minister stated that there are around 270 million Thalassemia patients in the world. India has the largest number of children with Thalassemia major in the world, about 1 to 1.5 lakhs, and about 10,000 -15,000 children having Thalassemia major are born every year. The only cure available for such children is bone marrow transplantation (BMT).

However, BMT is difficult and not affordable by the parents of all these children. Therefore, the mainstay of treatment is repeated blood transfusions, followed by regular iron chelation therapy to remove the excessive iron overload, consequent to the multiple blood transfusions.

Dr Harsh Vardhan stated that this new initiative of IRCS will provide a golden opportunity to administer adequate therapy to those affected enabling them lead a better life and preventing the birth of children affected with hemoglobinopathies, through carrier screening, genetic counselling and prenatal diagnosis. "This program will aid in prevention of birth of children affected with hemoglobinopathies, through well planned screening programs, information dissemination and awareness generation activities and help avert the imminent threat of this genetic disorder turning into a major health problem. With these progressive initiatives, we shall soon be able to achieve the New India being envisioned by the Prime Minister by 2022", he stated.

Haemoglobinopathies, such as Thalassemia and sickle cell disease are inherited disorders of red blood cells and are preventable. These illnesses are chronic, life impairing and in some cases, life threatening and impose a heavy emotional and financial burden on families