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The requirement of booster dose in India is not based on decisions taken in West: NTAGI

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The NTAGI will be considering multiple issues while deciding about the need for booster dose of COVID-19 vaccines



High-quality research in our country under the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) revealed that plasma therapy was not useful for most patients with severe COVID-19 infection requiring hospitalization.

Similar studies from other parts of the world have similarly failed to prevent death or reduction in hospital stay. It for these reasons, the ICMR has removed plasma therapy as part of the treatment guidelines for severe COVID-19 infection.

Having said that, if someone is infected, there will be generation of antibodies in his/her body along with cell based immunity. Antibodies are measurable and can also be called as visible immunity. The cell based immunity can also be termed as invisible immunity and as important as antibodies. These immunity components prevent disease and severity when such person gets re-infection with COVID-19.

Recently an antibody mixture was introduced in the market by a company, but that did not show much benefit. This antibody mixture also was based on the principle of plasma therapy. It was observed that if plasma or antibody is given to the patient in first week or early part of infection, then there can be some benefit.

A paper published recently mentions that if someone has got natural COVID-19 infection and has recovered, then the immunity of that person will protect him for long duration and in case if such person also takes vaccine, then the individual has a double barrelled protection against infection and the disease.

Is there need for booster dose of vaccine for our people?

The requirement of booster dose in our country cannot be decided on the basis of the situation and decisions taken in western countries. Local evidence based on the studies done in different parts of the country will guide the need for our people. This will be considered in the context when 70% to 80% of the population in our country is already infected. Overall a considerate decision will be taken based on the best available scientific evidence with the overall objective to provide optimal protection to our people.

Dr N K Arora, Chairman of India's COVID-19 Working Group of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI)