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Hepatitis: Need for collective community action

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Hepatitis: Need for collective community action



The panel discussion comprised of interactive sessions on hepatitis prevalence and challenges faced by Public Health Department, strategies and community-based interventions for prevention and education of Hepatitis, and collective

community impact strategies.

Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation has been supporting NGOs from Mumbai such as United Way of Mumbai and AmeriCares India to create awareness on hepatitis among the slum dwellers in Mumbai.

The organizations have recently concluded a week-long awareness initiative in different parts of the city such as Wadala, Chembur and Andheri.

The week was marked by a series of awareness drives carried out by the Green Ribbon Brigadiers of United Way of Mumbai. The Green Ribbon Brigadiers are youth from colleges across Mumbai trained by the NGO.

Dr Padmaja Keskar, executive health officer, Public Health Department, Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai was one of the panelists at the discussion.

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She said, "Together hepatitis B and C affect 500 million and kill approximately 1 million people every year. These are indicative of insufficient awareness among people about the disease. NGOs such as United Way of Mumbai and AmeriCares India are helping us spread awareness among the people with a goal of helping them take better decisions regarding their health. With more than 100,000 people dying in India due to hepatitis and also due to the 'silent' nature of the disease, it is very important for people to address the disease facts in the right manner."

While speaking on the work done by United Way of Mumbai and AmeriCares India, Ms Kanchana T K, director, corporate & public affairs, philanthropy, Bristol-Myers Squibb said, "We at Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation are looking at partners who have capacity. We are looking to build sustainable models that can be looked up by other organizations. Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation has given 18 grants of approximately Rs 20 crores in the past five years. Community outreach is our main aim and we look forward to such associations."

United Way of Mumbai also published an impact report on its Yuvroshni project for education, prevention and control of hepatitis during the panel discussion.

Yuvroshni is a project undertaken by United Way of Mumbai for prevention, education and control of Hepatitis B and C infections in high-risk areas.

Ms Jayanti Shukla, executive director, United Way of Mumbai said, "We targeted the population with high-risk groups across Mumbai to spread the message of hepatitis awareness. We have taken the help of the youth of the city to help us in our endeavor. Extensive awareness generation campaigns on occasions such as the World Hepatitis Day were carried on in slums across Mumbai. Our aim through these programs is to improve the understanding of Hepatitis B and C infections as serious infectious diseases."

College youth were trained as Green Ribbon Brigadiers and health educators on hepatitis. The Green Ribbon Brigadiers helped spread awareness among the peers and community.