

Ensure universal access to comprehensive eye care services: WHO

08 October 2015 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

Ensure universal access to comprehensive eye care services: WHO



WHO South-East Asia has 140 million visually impaired people.

The region has an estimated 12 million blind people, 8 million of them in India.

More than 50% of all blindness is caused by cataract which accounts for 33% of visual impairment.

Uncorrected refractive errors are responsible for 43% of the visual impairment in the Region.

About 65% of the visually impaired people are 50-year-old and above.

"These statistics should be viewed against the fact that 80% of visual impairment is avoidable. And that the blindness prevention strategies and restoration of sight are among the most cost-effective interventions in health care," said Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region.

She further added, "To reduce avoidable blindness and visual impairment, we must ensure universal access to comprehensive eye care services. There is a need to review and reinforce existing measures so that nobody suffers visual impairment and those with unavoidable vision loss can still achieve their full potential."

The WHO Global Action Plan (GAP) for the Prevention of Avoidable Blindness and Visual Impairment 2014-2019, emphasizes on improving eye health for everyone and reducing the prevalence of avoidable blindness and visual impairment by 25% by the year 2019.

Dr Poonam pointed that implementing simple measures such as eye care services in schools can help detect and correct refractive errors in children.

"And quality surgical procedures can help cataract patients get back to normal lifestyle very quickly," she stressed.

The World Sight Day is an opportunity to raise public awareness against blindness and visual impairment, and advocate for designating more resources for national blindness prevention programmes, said WHO in a press statement.

"Together we can make VISION 2020, the global initiative for the elimination of avoidable blindness, a reality," concluded Dr Poonam.