HIV : SCENARIO IN ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

Dear Editor,

This is with reference to Editorial "HIV : Changing scenario and new challenges" by Sanchette and Rai, [1] where in it has been stated that there is no report of any case from Andaman and Nicobar Islands. This contention is incorrect because as of 31 March, 98, 108 HIV positive cases have been reported from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. These figures have been relayed to NACO by the Regional Immuno-Surveillance Centre established at Port Blair in 1996.

Of the 108 HIV positive cases, 88 are foreign nationals who have been residing or were in transit through these islands. The remaining 20 are Indians and include service personnel who have been detected to be seropositive while posted on these Islands. Amongst the seropositive service personnel, there have been at least 03 definite cases of AIDS who were transferred to MH (CTC) Pune or died in this hospital. In fact, an ominous trend has been the detection of HIV infection in two native tribals in the Nicobar group of Islands who have never stepped out of these remote islands. These facts only highlight that there are unlikely to be any pockets free of the dreaded HIV infection and the AIDS threat looms large over India.

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REPLY

We thank Hande et al for the information provided. Similar observation if any are requested from readers about Arunachal Pradesh, Dadra and Nagaraveli, Lkshadweep, and Tripura.

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VITAMIN K ADMINISTRATION IN NEWBORNS - THE CONTROVERSY PERSISTS

Dear Editor,

The review article on Vit K in new born was very elucidative and informative. However the controversy over the role of Vit K administration and occurrence of malignancy at older age is yet to be resolved. The potential association between intramuscular Vit K and childhood cancer was first reported in 1990 [1]. The postulated reason was due to the fact that following administration of 1 mg Vit K the plasma level exceeded the endogenous levels by 10,000 times.

I would like to bring to your notice four articles and an editorial in 17 January, 98 issue of the British Medical Journal (Vol 7126) on this controversy which have failed to resolve the Vit K - Cancer question. A risk of solid tumors can almost certainly be ruled out, but a small risk of leukaemias cannot be excluded [2]. The study by McKinney et al [3] and the ecological study by Passmore et al [4] were reassuring with an odds ratio of solid tumors less than 1.0 and leukaemias having an odds ratio of less than 1.3.

The study by Parker et al [5] is a cause for concern. There is a two fold risk for acute lymphoblastic leukaemia among children 1-6 yrs of age. However a risk of solid tumors was almost certainly excluded. A similar finding was also reported by Passmore et al [6] in a case control study. A cause for concern was his finding that hospitals giving Vit K selectively (only to high risk newborns) had a higher risk as compared to those hospitals with non selective policies.

Thus, the dilemma will remain till further studies solve the controversy. The efficacy of repeated oral doses (2 mg - 3 doses

weekly in the first month) of oral preparation of Vit K needs to be evaluated.

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