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GHC makes Menstrual Hygiene Awareness A Cornerstone of Its Rural Health Outreach

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GHCâ??s â??Chuppi Todoâ?? campaign focuses on breaking stigma and encouraging women to discuss their health issues openly



Healthcare startup, Gramin Health Care has made menstrual hygiene and women's health a key component of its rural healthcare initiatives as it works to strengthen the rural healthcare ecosystem in India. A series of grassroot level campaigns empowering women, breaking the taboo around menstruation and providing low cost sanitary napkins are gradually changing the way rural women talk about periods.

In a country, where a large number of women fall prey to diseases and infections due to poor menstrual hygiene, there is a massive requirement for increasing awareness and offering low cost solutions to women to manage their periods. To further this goal, Gramin Health Care's 'Chuppi Todo' campaign creates avenues and opportunities for women to discuss their health issues without inhibition and embarrassment.

Ajoy Khandheria, Founder, Gramin Health Care said, "Our experience of working in rural India says that almost 60-70 per cent of women suffers from different diseases due to poor hygiene and lack of awareness. Lack of clean toilets and absence of menstrual hygiene is a critical element that impacts the health of women. Inadequate menstrual hygiene can result in reproductive tract infections, urinary bacterial and yeast infections which can cause serious complications, even kidney diseases if left untreated. It's very important therefore to create awareness regarding clean and safe practices during menstruation. Unfortunately, social stigma and taboo prevent women from seeking information and support for menstrual health."

Through regular workshops, interactions and outreach efforts, GHC's foot soldiers or 'Gramin Health Brand Ambassadors' constantly reach out to rural women and increase awareness about the need for menstrual health and hygienic management of periods. GHC has also tied up with Novartis Social Business, the social initiatives' arm of pharmaceutical major Novartis to conduct workshops and educational programs in villages and semi-urban areas in villages.

"Through our multidirectional efforts, we want to normalize menstruation by breaking the taboo and stigma around it. Our 'Chuppi Todo' campaign initiates a series of programs that educate women about how menstruation is a normal biological process and they need to talk about it openly. Most importantly, our initiative to low-cost sanitary napkins to women has helped improve their health standards and encouraged them to stop using unhygienic pieces of cloth to manage their periods" adds Ajoy.

Most women in rural areas do not have access to sanitary napkins and use pieces of cloth and rags. They wash and reuse these cloth pieces which is not a very hygienic practice. Taboo further prevents them from drying these cloth pieces under the sun which can sterilize harmful microbes.

Increasing awareness about menstrual hygiene and giving them access to affordable sanitary napkins, Rs 11 for three pads, is, therefore, a key to bring about a change in menstrual hygiene habits.