

## First of a kind paediatric ART Center to treat HIV Children

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**Free HIV medicines will be available for all HIV infected children at the ART center**



Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that tends to break down certain cells in your immune system (your body's defense against diseases that helps you stay healthy). The causes can be attributed to blood transfusion, sexual abuse, and also children can acquire from parent. Due to the lack of treatment, one with HIV is likely to suffer from Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Currently, there is no cure for HIV, but with the help of antiretroviral therapy it can be well-managed. To end the HIV epidemic, Bai Jerbai Wadia Hospital for Children has come up with a unique public private partnership (PPP) model of Paediatric ART center in association with NACO which was inaugurated by Dr Srikala Acharya of Mumbai District AIDS Control Society.

Dr Ira Shah, a leading paediatric infectious diseases specialist who has been looking after HIV infected children, since 2001 will be heading the Paediatric ART center. "With the establishment of the Paediatric ART center at B J Wadia Hospital for Children in Mumbai, children with HIV can get a holistic paediatric treatment under one roof with the help of a team of experts. Earlier, around 1.5% infants in Mumbai would get HIV from their mother. But now the percentage is lesser than that." Wadia Hospital sees several newly diagnosed HIV paediatric patients every month. In addition, it sees follow up patients in the oldest Paediatric HIV OPD in the city of Mumbai at Wadia Children Hospital.

She added, "At the moment, the number of kids with HIV has decreased due to preventive programme. But they are still a lot of children who are undiagnosed.

Hence, paediatric patients with HIV and associated infections will get a free HIV medicines - as well as complete Paediatric services for managing opportunistic infections and its comorbidities as Wadia hospital has all the facilities related to paediatric care," highlighted Dr Ira Shah, paediatric infectious diseases specialist, B J Wadia Hospital for Children.

Dr Minnie Bodhanwala, CEO, Wadia Hospitals said, "The Paediatric and Perinatal HIV clinic at B J Wadia Hospital for Children is the first paediatric HIV service in the city of Mumbai that was started in 1996. Till date, the clinic has treated more than 900 HIV infected children and has prevented HIV in over 1400 babies born to HIV infected mothers. With the help of NACO and MDACS, now free ART will be available to all HIV infected children as part of PPP Paediatric ART center at B J Wadia Hospital for Children."

She added, “Even before prevention of parent to child transmission (PPTCT) of HIV was available in the country, B J Wadia Hospital for children was offering the PPTCT programme and had brought down the transmission rate from 40% to <2% in these patients. Constant research in the field of HIV from this institute has helped in various guidelines and updates in the field of HIV.”