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Experts call for new health policy to prevent disability due to snake bite

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Snakebite can produce multiple disabilities of various organ systems including acute kidney injury and blindness



Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale highlighted the need for a new health policy to tackle snake bite disabilities.

Public health experts, policymakers and administrators gathered at a policy roundtable on Snakebite & Disability, organised by Integrated Health & Wellbeing (IHW) Council and powered by Bharat Serums & Vaccines (BSV), to underline the requirement of spreading awareness on means to prevent disability caused due to snakebite on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disability (on 3rd December).

“From 2000 to 2019 1.2 million people died due to the snakebite, whereas, in India, approximately 58,000 people die every year due to snakebite. This grave issue needs special emphasis from the government. New technologies need to be invented to deal with it. Local people, who take out the venom, should be encouraged. A new policy should be made to deal with this health crisis due to the snakebite,” said Athawale.

Urvashi Prasad, Director, DMEO, Niti Aayog outlined the need for strengthening the infrastructure of the primary healthcare centres, which are the first point of contact in such cases.

"We need to recognise the fact that disability is perhaps the more important outcome in snakebite envenoming than death itself,” said Dr David Williams, Technical Officer (Antivenoms) vaccines, WHO.

However, Chetan Raj Singh, Vice President-Critical Care & Emergency Medical, Bharat Serums & Vaccines said there is no dearth of anti-venom medicines in India but of trained doctors. "Doctors at the community health centres and the primary health centres need to be trained”, he said.

Dr Maya Gopal Krishnan, Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, AIIMS, Jodhpur said, “The patients simply need a blood clotting test. Snakebite can produce multiple disabilities of various organ systems. These kinds of disabilities can lead to kidney disease. Around 25 to 30 per cent are going through acute kidney injury besides blindness.”