

## LETTER TO EDITOR

## Why Need for National Expert Group Technical Consultation on Prevention and Treatment of Iron Deficiency Anemia

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### Introduction

Iron deficiency anemia is the most common nutrient deficiency in India. It impacts the lives of millions of mothers and children in our country through impaired health, development, quality of life and productivity. The Government of India initiated National Iron-plus Initiative Programme (NIPI) for Control of Iron Deficiency Anaemia in 2013 with an aim to prevent and treat anaemia amongst different age groups, namely i) 6-59 months; ii) 6-10 years; iii) 11-19 years, iv) Pregnant and lactating Mothers, and v) Women in Reproductive age group.

Recently WHO global Guidelines have been issued in 2016 on this subject after been rigorous review of scientific evidence (1-3). These have been published by WHO as Iron supplementation for Prevention and Control of Iron Deficiency Anaemia in: i) Infants and children; ii) Adolescent Girls and Women; iii) Postpartum women; and iv) Pregnant mothers.

Some of these recommendations have potential implications for alignment or modification of the ongoing NIPI initiative. Further, there are other important technical issues on which consensus amongst Indian scientists is required. These include: (i) Combating Iron Deficiency Anemia through Food Fortification; ii) Potential of iron overload associated adverse effects by operationalizing multiple strategies to enhance iron intake (supplementation and fortification); (iii) Suitability of Enteric Coated iron folic acid tablets in A National Programme (iv)

Appropriate method for estimation of Hemoglobin in populations; and (v) Key research priorities to combat iron deficiency anemia.

In an attempt to forge a consensus on the aforementioned aspects, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi is organizing a National Technical Consultation on Prevention and Treatment of Anemia on 23rd to 25th April 2018 Under aegis of Ministry of Health and Family welfare Government of India in collaboration with i) Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Science and Research, New Delhi; ii) Nutrition Society of India; iii) Public Health Foundation of India; iv) Indian Association of Preventive and Social Medicine; v) Indian Public Health Association; vi) Indian Academy of Pediatrics (Nutrition Sub-specialty Chapter); and vii) Federation of Obstetric and Gynecological Societies of India (FOGSI), viii) Indian Society of Haematology and Blood Transfusion (ISHBT) ix) International Epidemiological Association - South East Asia Region (IEA-SEA) x) Alive and Thrive India xii) KnIT, BIRAC DBT, India

The specific objectives of the National Technical Consultation are:

- i) To evaluate the congruence between the recent WHO (2016) guidelines for Iron Supplementation and National Iron Plus Initiative (NIPI) guidelines
- ii) To consider potential modifications in the NIPI guidelines, if required

iii) To examine the role of iron fortification of food for combating Anemia in India

iv) To identify key researchable areas for combating Anemia in India

v) To disseminate these recommendations to various stakeholders particularly policy makers

The technical consultation has been restricted by invitation to eminent scientist in the country. In addition representative of various stakeholders have been invited. The recommendations of this National Technical Consultation would be shared with Union Ministries of Health and Family Welfare, Women and Child Development, and Human Resource Development for their kind perusal and adoption. It is hoped that recommendations will also prove useful for Health and Nutrition Programme Managers, Administrators and Planners in the

various States and Non Government Organizations in India

## References

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