GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE

RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO.29
TO BE ANSWERED ON THE 20TH JULY, 2021

TREATMENT PROTOCOL TO CURE BLACK FUNGUS AND DELTA VARIANT OF COVID-19

29 # SHRI RAM NATH THAKUR:

Will the Minister of **HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE** be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has prepared any treatment protocol to cure Black Fungus infections and Delta variant of the Coronavirus;

(b) whether it is a fact that a patient of Black Fungus needs to be hospitalised for a longer period of time; and

(c) whether Government will issue any guidelines regarding the expenses on its treatment so that even the poorest people can get the treatment?

ANSWER
THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
(SHRI MANSUKH MANDAVIYA)

(a) to (c): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 29* FOR 20TH JULY, 2021

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(a)& (b): After expert deliberations in the National Task Force on COVID-19, a detailed advisory on treatment and management of COVID-19 associated Mucormycosis (CAM) was formalized and disseminated to all States and UTs on 7th June 2021. Amphotericin-B has been prescribed as a drug of choice. The drug is available in two formulations (i) Liposomal Amphotericin B and (ii) Amphotericin B Deoxycholate, which are similar in efficacy, however the latter needs to be used with greater caution with respect to its effects on kidney function test and electrolyte imbalance. Second drug of choice is Posaconazole which may be used in cases with compromised renal function, drug reaction to Amphotericin B, electrolyte imbalance or in case of non-availability of Amphotericin B.

Taking cognizance of association between elevated blood sugar levels (whether in patients with preexisting diabetes mellitus, or hyperglycemia due to steroid therapy), an updated "Clinical Guidance on Diagnosis and Management of Diabetes at COVID-19 Patient Management facility" was already issued by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare on 1st June 2021.

Similarly realizing the multi-disciplinary approach required to manage patients suffering from Mucormycosis and other fungal infections, a checklist for managing Mucormycosis and other fungal infections was also circulated to all States/UTs on 11th June 2021.

The clinical management guidelines for managing COVID-19 cases by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare advocates rational use of steroids for managing moderate to severe cases of COVID-19 under strict medical supervision. Further noting relationship between use of steroids and other immunosuppressive drugs, "Advisory for rational use of Steroids and Tocilizumab in the treatment of Covid -19 patients" was issued by Directorate General of Health Services.

As per WHO, there is some evidence to indicate higher transmissibility and a possible increase in disease severity for cases infected with Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2, but no separate clinical management protocol has been

advocated by WHO to manage such patients. Ministry of Health & Family Welfare also after expert deliberations has concluded that the existing clinical management protocol for managing COVID-19 cases suffices for treatment of cases infected with Delta variant of COVID-19 and clinical management protocol doesn't warrant any change.

Mucormycosis and other fungal infections are most commonly seen as opportunistic infection. They are found in those who have low underlying immunity either due to a disease process like diabetes, cancers particularly hematological malignancies, etc. or as a side effect of prolonged/irrational use of certain drugs like steroids, immunosuppressive drugs for management of other disorders including COVID-19.

The duration of treatment required in such patient depends on the type of presentation, extent of involvement of critical organs, response to therapy as well as presence and status of co-morbidities.

(c): The treatment of Mucormycosis and other fungal infection is provided free of cost in all Central Government hospitals and autonomous institutions under Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY provides free health cover up to Rs. 5 lakhs per year per family. The scheme was launched with 10.74 crore beneficiary families. However, 33 states/UTs implementing the scheme has increased the beneficiary base to 13.44 families. Beneficiaries of Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY can avail free treatment of post-COVID related complications including Mucormycosis, Black Fungus etc. under the scheme.

States are also being supported in terms of allocation and supply of drugs Amphotericin B. Under the Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment (AMRIT) retail pharmacy network, drugs including Amphotericin B are being provided at affordable prices. In addition, Amphotericin B is also being provided at an affordable price under Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojna (PMBJP).

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