NEW GUIDELINES FOR FOOD INDUSTRY

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is putting in place mandatory norms for companies against promoting ‘unhealthy’ food habits. The new guidelines will put under the scanner claims about food or ‘health benefits’, food marketed as meal substitutes, portion sizes, communication aimed at children and labeling on food packs. So some food companies are increasing the use of social and health related messages in their advertising and packaging. Since they are facing heightened pressure from anti-obesity campaigns, health activists and nutritionists for selling products that aid weight gain, these companies are trying hard to create a healthy image.

COMMITTEE APPROVES NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF CANCER, DIABETES AND STROKE [NPCDCC] FOR IMPLEMENTATION.

With an estimated outlay of Rs 1,230.9 crore for implementation during the 11th five year plan, the Union Cabinet’s committee on economic affairs approved the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke [NPCDCS]. The programme will be implemented in 20,000 subcentres and 700 Community Health Centres in 100 districts across 15 states/UTs. The programme has been planned in the wake of a rapid health transition i.e. 42% deaths caused by Non Communicable Diseases and prevalence of diabetes, hypertension, IHD (Ischaemic Heart Disease) and stroke being 62.47, 159.46, 37.00 and 1.54 persons per 1000 respectively (as per the WHO report, 2002).

CENTRE MAKES THE A (H1N1) VACCINE MANDATORY FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS

The Centre has made the A (H1N1) vaccine mandatory for healthcare workers after the failure of states to utilize the vaccines. The Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad and the Union Health Secretary K. Sujatha Rao have both written letters to the states to ensure utilization of vaccines. Also there is some urgency in the matter as the life of this vaccine is not very long and needs to be utilized well before its expiry date. The Ministry had last year imported 15 lakh doses of H1N1 vaccines from the French vaccine manufacturing company ‘Sanofi Pasteur’ exclusively for healthcare workers but very few states actually utilized the vaccines.
CASHLESS CLAIMS TO BE ON CASE TO CASE BASIS

A meeting of the various insurance companies, healthcare providers and Third Party Administrators (TPA) held under the aegis of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has led to the following changes being recommended. Of these, the first being the handling of claims by the insurance companies on a case to case basis. It was also recommended to grade hospitals into three categories – A, B and C depending upon the infrastructure and specialty of a particular hospital and to adopt standard procedures to be followed in 41 types of surgeries.

FORTIS QUITS BATTLE TO TAKEOVER PARKWAY HOLDINGS

Mr. Malvinder Singh and Mr. Shivinder Singh – the promoters of Fortis Healthcare have withdrawn from the fierce two month old battle to take over Singapore-based Parkway Holdings. Fortis will divest its entire stake in Parkway to rival suitor, Malaysian state fund Khazanah for about Rs. 3800 crore and obtain a profit of Rs. 350 crore.

THE MATERNAL HEALTH TASK FORCE ANNOUNCES NEW GRANTS

The Maternal Health Task Force at EngenderHealth announced today that it has awarded 8 new grants supporting innovative maternal health research across Asia, Africa and Latin America. The research, which will be carried out by local organizations in developing countries, will lead to national policy recommendations for improving maternal health. Each research project will evaluate an ongoing effort to advance maternal health in places where too many women still die from preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth.

UN DECLARES ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER A HUMAN RIGHT

The UN General Assembly recognized access to clean water and sanitation as a human right, a move hailed by water advocates as a momentous step towards a future treaty. After more than 15 years of contentious debate on the issue, 122 countries voted in favor of a compromise Bolivian resolution enshrining the right while the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and 37 other nations abstained. The non-binding text "declares the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of the right to life".

TOOLKIT RELEASED TO IMPLEMENT REVISED NEW WHO RECOMMENDATIONS ON PMTCT AND ARV TREATMENT

At the XVIII International AIDS Conference the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation has issued the first of a series of three linked toolkits to facilitate the adaptation and implementation of the revised World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations on PMTCT (Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission) and ARV (Antiretroviral) treatment. The technical areas considered are: Antiretroviral drugs for treating pregnant women and preventing HIV infection in infants, infant feeding in the context of HIV, and antiretroviral treatment for children, adolescents, and adults.
A STUDY BY INDIAN RESEARCHES SAYS THAT HOMEOPATHY CAN PREVENT ENCEPHALITIS

According to the American Journal of Infectious Diseases, Indian researchers have reported that homeopathy can prevent Japanese Encephalitis (JE), an infection that infects 50,000 and kills 10,000 in South and South-east Asia each year. A study by researchers at Kolkata’s School of Tropical Medicine and the Central Council for research in Homeopathy showed that the homeopathic medicine Belladonna prevented infection in chick embryos infected with JE virus. Belladonna – the deadly night shade – is used to treat complaints of sudden infections and fever.

INDIA’S FIRST NON-SURGICAL TREATMENT FOR UTERINE FIBROIDS – MRGFUS, OPENS AT JASLOK HOSPITAL

A revolutionary new technology by GE - Magnetic Resonance-guided Focused Ultrasound surgery (MRgFUS) – is opening at Jaslok Hospital, Mumbai. It treats uterine fibroids in women by using high intensity ultrasound waves to non-invasively destroy benign tumours of the uterus. It destroys fibroids without causing damage to surrounding tissues and could be used as a common alternative to the removal of a uterus or hysterectomy. The treatment which is carried out as an outpatient procedure has a shorter recovery time than hysterectomy.

ONE INJECTION PER WEEK FOR DIABETES PATIENT

According to a report in the Lancet, researchers have found that a long acting medication, Exenatide, if injected once a week, improves blood sugar and induces weight loss in type 2 diabetes. The study was conducted in VU Medical Centre, Amsterdam and will greatly benefit obese patients or those prone to recurrent hypoglycemia.

RECENT RESEARCHES

1. India’s population will surpass China by 2050.
2. Women’s exact peak heart rate found (162 beats): Circulation study
3. Serum Institute of India launches Nasovac: intranasal H1N1 vaccine
4. 55% of India’s population is poor: UNDP report
5. World Population Day was celebrated on 11 July
6. ‘INTELLISPACE’ - Advanced Patient Monitoring and Healthcare Informatics solutions launched by Philips Healthcare in Chennai
7. Drug users inject other addicts blood: Survey
8. India has just one operation theatre per one lakh people: Study by Harvard School Of Public Health
NATIONAL TOBACCO CONTROL PROGRAMME

Tobacco is the world’s leading single agent of death. Each year it kills more than 5 million people in the world. In 2003, the Parliament enacted the “Cigarette and other Tobacco Products Act” (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) COTPA Act with comprehensive regulations against the serious threat of tobacco use. In 2004, the government of India ratified the treaty WHO- Framework convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). WHO FCTC is the first global health treaty negotiated under the auspices of the World Health Organization and provides the framework for the countries to develop strategies for tobacco control.

To fulfill the obligations under the COTPA Act and WHO-FCTC, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare proposed the National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) in the 11th Five Year Plan (2007-08). The pilot phase of the NTCP was launched in 2007 – 08 covering 18 Districts of 9 States. Further in 2008-09, 12 new states covering 24 districts have been added. The main components of NTCP are as under:

- Trainings
- School Programmes
- Tobacco Cessation Centers (TCC)
- Monitoring tobacco control laws and reporting
- Information Education, Communication (IEC)

At the state level, there are state tobacco control cells to coordinate the activities of district tobacco control units through which the programme gets implemented. WHO in collaboration with the Government identified 13 Tobacco Cessation Clinics in 2002 in diverse settings (cancer treatment centres, psychiatric centres, medical colleges and NGO’s) to help people to stop tobacco use. Efforts are being made to integrate NTCP into other ongoing national health programmes like RNTCP (Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme).

References: