

NEWSLETTER

Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDDs)/USI

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Contents:



IODINE; Its Need & Deficiency Disorders (IDD / USI)

Iodine Deficiency – silent killer/ major health problem in Pakistan

Activities performed by TheNetwork

Best practices worldwide to control IDDs can be a case for Pakistan

Who is supposed to respond?

Media Scan: Global happenings



Editorial: Unnecessary delay in legislation on USI

Dr Arif Azad
Executive Coordinator

Universal Salt Iodization (USI) is a key component to check Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDDs), which is a primary reason for goiter, mental retardation and many other diseases. The advanced countries conscious of the basic responsibility to safeguard public health, have already achieved the USI goals and ailments associated with IDDs have become history in these countries. But developing nations, including Pakistan, far behind as they are in every

aspect of life, have yet to realize the importance of issue. Some of the third world countries have done necessary legislation to make iodize salt compulsory, with very good impact on public health. It was believed that other countries will follow their example but it has not come true. Pakistan with a huge number of people suffering from IDDs is also part of the group where the issue of USI is not considered worth attention. One wonders why the government functionaries are not bringing the simple legislation.

The civil society is not pessimistic, despite clear disappointment and has been knocking at the doors of the policy makers to swiftly enact proper legislation, and will continue to advocate. It also hopes that the democratic government will take up the issues at the earliest.



IODINE; Its Need & Deficiency Disorders (IDD / USI)

By: Dr. Syed Rizwan Ali
Programme Coordinator (Nutrition)

What are micronutrients?

We all human being needs food composed of Carbohydrates, Fats and Proteins in 'large' amounts plus some vitamins and minerals for physical growth and continued energy source in specified form and quantity throughout life. Ironically imbalanced diet (both macro & micro) concept, poverty and ignorance make us to under estimate / ignore the importance of 'Micronutrients' like Iodine, Zinc, Iron, Folic Acid & vitamins. It is more unfortunate that we are not taught about the vital & 'life long implications of deficiencies' pertaining to these micronutrients. Who is responsible? Iodine deficiency is the leading preventable cause of brain damage;

- Deficiency in fetus causes cretinism
- Deficiency in neonate mental retardation
- Deficiency in Child impaired mental function
- Deficiency in Adult impaired mental function, delirium, dementia, apathy, fatigue, depression, psycho motor retardation
- Deficiency increases Infant & Maternal mortality rate

All these are preventable; BUT who will owe the responsibility?

The Scope of the Problem- When any body can have it?

Usually the most severe damage of iodine deficiency can occur during fetal development and in the first

few years of life. Globally, 38 million infants are born without the protection that iodine offers the growing brain, and a full 18 million are mentally impaired as a result.

Public Health Concern and Universal Approach

Health being a global concern, to avoid the problem and improving the status of health of all Nations especially more marginalized some 118 countries signed an agreement with the technical support of WHO and WFP to fortify ordinary salt with Iodine & start a campaign of Universal salt Iodization (USI)

Just imagine a family with low IQ children or mentally retarded kids! Mental, Physical Growth, cultural aspects, future scope of the kids in family or at large for the Nation??? Disorders verses cost implications and poverty and low literacy smiling over the ignorance for an avoidable problem that is just ignored! Health budget is too low to bear the long term implications.

How much Iodine is required in a day /in whole Life?

Equaling to a pencil point a day and a teaspoon full in our whole life is the total Iodine what we require. Imagine the deal? No one needs to be a business tycoon! By doing so little we can produce a most intelligent family and an intelligent nation at large. How simple the equation is!

Who has to do it; Public or civil Society?

The government being a signatory is not supposed to run only pilot project in pockets. Third world

developing countries having equal or even lower 'status' globally have adopted successful models through political commitment & ultimately achieved the targets well before deadlines. Political WILL with effective legislation and flawless implementation and monitoring is the key to successes.

We are unfortunate in this respect as government, even if willing to do so, red tapes of beaucracy being least interested in consumers interest and rights always jumps in to block public interest for the reason we all understand so well.

But the Civil Society and consumer rights organizations like 'The Network for consumers protection' are striving hard fearlessly for a healthy, intelligent and prosperous nation with bright future and thus are not ready to surrender at any cost and is capitalizing all possible ways and means with financial & human resources topped with clarity of mission and by applying skills to protect the nation from the clutches of this horrible and avoidable deficiency disorder of Iodine, such a minor 'enemy' but hampering millions and millions on earth.

Civil Society works in an integrated & collaborative fashion after developing a clear line of action and involving all stakeholders, including NGOs, CBOs, INGOs, public & political and media sector by forming alliances of all vital segments that can produce a dent in the visionary approach and influence priorities of the policy makers- yes they are our leaders and well wishers and surely we will make them to work in the best interest of a common man to change the faith of the nation! Are we sure this will happen???

Iodine Deficiency – silent killer/major health problem in Pakistan

By: Col (R) Prof Dr Muhammad Ashraf Chaudhry

Iodine Deficiency is the world's most prevalent yet easily preventable cause of brain damage. Pakistan is amongst the countries where iodine deficiency is a serious public health problem and is threat to the social and economic development of the country. A WHO survey on iodine status worldwide lists Pakistan as having "severe iodine deficiency" with 135 million people having insufficient iodine



intake and 50 million are suffering from iodine deficiency. Pakistan is rated 6th amongst the countries, where iodine deficiency is a serious health problem. According to UNICEF, 70% of total population of Pakistan is at risk of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDDs). More than 5 million children born every year in Pakistan are unprotected against brain damage.

According to National Nutrition Survey (NNS. 2001-02), only 17 per cent of the population uses iodized salt in our country, which is incredibly

low even if compared with countries with similar socio-economic conditions like Bangladesh (78%), and Nepal (98%).

Iodine is essential for the normal growth and development and well being of all humans. The whole spectrum of health consequences casually linked to iodine deficiency is collectively known as Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDDs). IDD is most commonly seen among poor, pregnant women and preschool children. Effects of IDD on the baby in the mother's womb are in the form of congenital abnormalities (defects by birth), early deaths, brain damage, cretinism & deafness; effects on the child and adolescent are goitre (enlargement of thyroid gland), impaired mental function, stunted physical growth, short stature & diminished school performance; whereas effects of iodine deficiency on women are in the form of decreased fertility, spontaneous abortions and still births in pregnant women. Iodine deficiency can result in loss of 15 IQ points. The main factor responsible for iodine deficiency is a low dietary supply of iodine.

The addition of small amount of iodine to table salt in the form of potassium iodate at very little cost can help prevent the incidence of this serious disorder. Seafood is also a known source of iodine. Other sources of iodine are bread, grains, green vegetables, milk and eggs. Daily requirement of iodine for adults is placed at 150 micrograms per day or 5 gram (1 teaspoonful) of iodized salt per day. The most viable option is having Universal Salt

Iodization (USI) of edible salt across the country.

The Network, Ministry of Health, UNICEF and some other likeminded organizations have been striking to overcome this public health challenge and this has a positive impact. However, concerted efforts of civil society organizations including health professionals, teachers, religious leaders, social workers, salt producers/processors and policy makers are required in partnership to overcome this challenge.

Medical community could play a vital role in advocacy for the usage of iodized salt at the gross-root level. Medical professionals can make aware of the consequences of iodine deficiency and dispel any myths, disbeliefs or misconceptions associated with the use of iodized salt. "Iodine Deficiency is so easy to prevent that it is a crime to let a single child be born mentally handicapped for that reason".



