

## Letters to the Editor

### Towards a Rabies Free India by 2020

Dear Sir,

I wish to inform you that I recently spoke at the Indian Academy of Pediatrics, Infectious Diseases Chapter, conference in Goa on the importance of "PRIMARY PREVENTION OF RABIES - REDUCING THE BURDEN OF THE BITES"

I am convinced that as long as our country and we, focus only on anti rabies vaccine as the main plank of the plan to achieve a "RABIES FREE INDIA BY 2020", we will be unlikely to achieve our goal.

Many countries around the world, including some in South East Asia have eradicated rabies from their geographical boundaries by two simple measures: 1) Strict registration, licensing and annual anti-rabies vaccination of all pet dogs. 2) Sustained removal of all stray dogs from public places ( into shelters or adoptive homes).

Why is a policy that has succeeded in eradicating rabies from so many countries, not be good enough for India?

It is only by combining a logical scientific stray dog population policy, in keeping with existing laws, and thereby REDUCING THE BURDEN OF THE BITES" and better vaccine delivery schedules including IDRV, that India can hope to achieve a "RABIES FREE INDIA BY 2020",

Sadly I do not think the APCRI is yet convinced of this fact, and ready to push for this with the Government of India, with all the scientific documentation, determination and conviction at it's command.

As it is, the so called ABC-ARV programme which was supposed to reduce the stray dog population has been tried for the last fifteen years, with disastrous consequences: 1) A rising population of stray dogs in public places, 2) One death from rabies every thirty minutes, and 3) Rising number of victims of stray dog attack, seventeen million per year. (Ref : WHO sponsored National Multicentric Rabies Survey carried out by the Association for Prevention and Control of Rabies in India (APCRI) , published in May 2004)

The so called ABC(DOGS) RULES 2001 framed by the Ministry of Culture in 2001 is unconstitutional because it is in conflict with the parent law- a fact recorded by Chief Justice V.K. Bali of the Ernakulum High Court in a land mark case (Judgement in WP(C) No. 30611 of 2004, reported on 3rd March 2006).

Can any one explain what the Ministry of Culture have to do with saving lives from rabies or controlling stray dog population? This should be the responsibility of the Ministry of Health, which currently has absolutely no say in the formulation of a logical scientific policy.

Right now rabies/stray dog attacks is responsible for more mortality and morbidity than malaria, Japanese encephalitis and dengue put together.

APCRI must press for the declaration a National Rabies Eradication Programme, by the Ministry of Health, on the lines of other national infectious diseases eradication programmes, and for the implementation of the laws which have presently been side lined.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr. Rozario Menezes**  
APCRI Life- Member, Goa.

### Good News from Bangladesh

Dear Sir,

I just wanted to share the recent developments for prevention and control of Rabies in Bangladesh since last World Rabies Day 2009 [WRD 2009].

I am also very happy to be part of all the recent developments and activities. I would like to share the Good News with you, and they are as follows:

1. We have started an "Animal bite and Rabies Awareness & Prevention Program" on TV (Sponsored by Sanofi-Aventis).
2. Association for Prevention and Control of Rabies in Bangladesh (APCRIB) has started arranging awareness and management training program for the Medical Doctors outside Dhaka city.
3. Very soon the "National Guidelines for Prevention and Control of Rabies" in Bangladesh, will be completed.
4. Bangladesh has finalized the plans to phase out NTV very soon, and start using CCVs at all levels for Animal bite Post-exposure Prophylaxis [PEP].
5. Bangladesh plans to introduce ID PEP with CCV, in Dhaka in a couple of months.

I am really very excited to share all the good news, which has come our way in the last one year from WRD-2009 to WRD-2010. I feel, we have achieved a lot in this one year.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr. M. Salim Uzzaman**  
Dhaka, Bangladesh.