

## Editorial

# ALARMING RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RABIES SCENARIO OF INDIA

In the last Thirty years lot of changes have taken place in the Rabies Scenario of India. Most of these changes are for the good of the country and its people

**The most significant change in the last 30 years has taken place in the availability of many high quality anti-rabies vaccines and rabies immunoglobulins.**

In 1985 only Semple Vaccine was used in the Govt. Hospitals and clinics. Anti- Rabies Serum was used at the ARC of CRI Kasauli, and similar places only. Only one TCV called MIRV [HDCV] was available in very few places. Most GPs, to whom, most people approach for remedies to their medical problems, did not treat the animal bite victims. They used to refer them to the Govt. ARCs, some very far away. Now, after 30 years there are 9 brands of modern anti-rabies vaccines available to the clinicians for managing animal bite cases. There are 2 brands of HRIG and 3 brands of ERIG available for passive immunization. Many GPs are treating animal bite cases very confidently and correctly. Some are using HRIG and ERIG where applicable. This change in the approach in managing animal bite cases among GPs was due to the innumerable CMEs organized throughout the country. These CMEs were successful in changing the approach to animal bite cases among GPs. The resource persons or the speakers in these CMEs were mostly APCRI members. The CMEs were mostly sponsored by different corporate houses marketing different brands of Rabies vaccines and immunoglobulins.

**From 2003 to 2005 there was an ICMR study evaluating the TCVs produced in India against a TCV pre-approved for IDRV by WHO and manufactured outside India [Verorab], This study was done under a directive from the Drugs Controller General of India [DCGI] prior to giving its approval for use of IDRV in India.**

**In 2005, a very significant change took place. It was the total stoppage of the use of Semple Vaccine [NTV] in the Govt. Hospitals and ARCs. It was replaced by TCVs used in Essen Schedule. There were vaccine shortages in many centers.**

**In 2006, the Drugs Controller General of India [DCGI] allowed the use of IDRV in selected clinics fulfilling certain criteria.**

**From 2006 onwards IDRV was started in Govt. Hospitals and Clinics. Now more than half of the total**

**number of States and Union Territories use IDRV in their Hospitals and ARCs. There is no vaccine shortage in those places where IDRV was used. This is due to the fact that the cost of a full course of PEP is much less, and with the same amount of vaccine many more persons can be vaccinated. RIGs are also being used in many Govt. ARCs (Not All).**

**Formation of APCRI:** There was no professional association to help those doctors who worked at the ARCs. On 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1998 the Association for Prevention and Control of Rabies in India was born with the objective of having a Scientific and Professional platform to focus on Rabies and its Control. Annual Conferences on Rabies and its Control began to be organized every year from 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1999 onwards.

APCRI Journal was born on 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1999 and was published once a year from 1999 to 2006. From 2006 till now it is published twice a year. This journal has increased the knowledge base of everyone interested in Rabies Control.

In 2003 - 2004 the WHO-APCRI national multi-centric survey to assess the burden of rabies in India was carried out. **APCRI was mainly instrumental in stopping the use of Semple Vaccine [NTV] and introduction of IDRV in Govt. Hospitals and ARCs.** This has resulted in much better access to modern PEP to the people of India.

**Alarming Recent Developments:** It has come to our notice that some vaccine manufacturers have started supplying 1 (one) ml of diluents with their vaccines registered as packs containing 0.5 ml of diluents meant for IM usage. This they have done for getting a favorable response in the Tender bids for supply of vaccines in various Govt. hospitals. In some places, they are managing to get their product accepted. This act of theirs is unethical and puts the innocent victim of dog bite at great risk. Unfortunately this act of theirs has not come to the notice of the regulatory authorities. I hope, necessary corrective measures are taken in the near future.

**Alarming Shortage of RIGs:** There is an alarming shortage of RIGs throughout the country. Some manufacturers have stopped production due to various reasons. HRIG is not available at all due to various reasons. The Govt. of India should look into this matter and make RIGs available in both the Govt. ARCs and in the retail trade market.