Global Measles Cases up by 300%: WHO

Recently, the **World Health Organization** (WHO) has released **new measles surveillance data for 2019.**

- According to WHO, **measles cases rose 300% worldwide** through the first three months of 2019 compared to the same period in 2018.
- WHO has found that the current outbreak is mostly among children **in both developing as well as developed countries.**

Reasons for the Rise in Measles Cases

- **Anti-Vaccination Movement**
  - The major reason for rising in measles cases in developed countries is the **anti-vaccine movement seen recently in many parts of Europe and the United States.**
  - Such movements are driven by **fraudulent claims linking the vaccine against measles to risk of autism in children.**
  - However, repeated studies have shown that there is **no such link.**
- **Poverty**
  - In poorer countries, fewer people are vaccinated and a **larger portion of the population is left vulnerable to the virus.**
  - This creates the environment for a large outbreak to occur - such as those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kyrgyzstan, and Madagascar.

Vaccine Hesitancy

- Vaccine hesitancy refers to **delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccines despite the availability** of vaccination services.
- In 2019, WHO has added Vaccine hesitation to the list of ten threats to global health in 2019.
- **Reasons for Vaccine Hesitancy**
  - **Compulsory nature** of vaccines is seen as forcing by state
  - **Temporal adverse health** outcomes due to vaccination,
  - **Unfamiliarity** with vaccine-preventable diseases,
  - **Lack of trust** in corporations and public health agencies.
- **Steps to Address Vaccine Hesitancy**
  - **Detecting** and **addressing** vaccine-hesitant subgroups
  - **Educating** all **health care providers** involved with immunization on best practices
  - **Educating children**, **youth** and **adults** on the importance of immunization for health

Measles

- Measles virus is an enveloped, ribonucleic acid virus of the genus Morbillivirus.
- Measles is highly contagious, and an infected person will often transmit the virus to over 90% of unprotected close contacts.
- The virus infects the r**espiratory tract, then spreads throughout the body.** Measles is **a human disease** and is **not known to occur in animals.**
- Measles **can be entirely prevented through a two-dose vaccine** and had been officially eliminated in many countries with advanced healthcare systems.

- **Treatment**
    - **No specific antiviral treatment** exists for measles virus.
    - Severe complications from measles can be avoided through medical care that ensures good nutrition, adequate fluid intake, and treatment of dehydration.
- **Prevention**
    - **Routine measles vaccination** for children, combined with **mass immunization campaigns** in countries with high case and death rates, are key public health strategies to reduce global measles deaths.

The Measles & Rubella Initiative

- Launched in 2001, the Measles & Rubella Initiative (M&R Initiative) is a global partnership led by the American Red Cross, United Nations Foundation, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), UNICEF and WHO.
- The Initiative is committed to ensuring that no child dies from measles or is born with congenital rubella syndrome. We help countries to plan, fund and measure efforts to stop measles and rubella for good

India and Measles

- **Incidence**
    - India has one of the **highest incidences of Measles in the world.**
    - According to WHO Data, in 2018, **more than 68,000 confirmed cases of measles** were reported in India.
    - However, India has made important gains in recent years. **Measles deaths have declined by 51% from an estimated 100,000 in the year 2000 to 49 000 in 2015.**
- **Government Initiatives**
    - **Measles-Rubella (MR) vaccination**
        - The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** launched MR Vaccination program in 2017.
        - The MR campaign **targets around 41 crore children across the country,** the largest ever in any campaign.
        - All children aged between 9 months and less than 15 years will be given **a single shot of Measles-Rubella (MR) vaccination irrespective of their previous measles/rubella vaccination status or measles/rubella disease status.**
        - MR vaccine will be provided free- of- cost across the states.
    - Other Initiatives include **Universal Immunization Programme (UIP), Mission Indradhanush and Intensified Mission Indradhanush.**

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