

Govt on a mission to eradicate sickle cell anaemia in AP by '47

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OBSERVING World Sickle Cell Disease Day, Principal Secretary (Tribal Welfare) Kantilal Dande highlighted the prevalence of the disease among the tribal population in the State.

Speaking at a programme held at AIIMS, Mangalagiri on Wednesday, he revealed that approximately one in every 86 births among Scheduled Tribes (STs) results in a child with Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) and the government aims to eliminate sickle cell anaemia by 2047.

"This genetic disorder affects haemoglobin in red blood cells, leading to chronic anaemia, acute painful episodes, organ infarction, chronic organ damage, and a significant reduction in quality of life and life expectancy. Both men and women are equally at risk, with the disease manifesting as a carrier trait, sickle cell disease, or sickle cell anaemia", he added.

Kantilal Dande called upon medical students to actively



Principal Secretary Kantilal Dande at AIIMS Mangalagiri | PRASANT MADUGULA

participate in the eradication of this disease and emphasised the importance of educating patients and carriers, ensuring regular follow-up care, and maintaining a positive outlook on life.

Tribal Welfare Department Director J Venkata Murali said that in response to this critical health issue, the Central government has embarked on a mission for the elimination of Sickle Cell Disease by 2047. This mission involves creating awareness, universally screening 7 crore people aged 0-40 in affected tribal areas, and providing counselling through collaborative efforts of Central Ministries, he informed.

"Andhra Pradesh, one of the ten states with a significant tribal population under the fifth schedule, has set ambitious screening targets to combat SCD. For the year 2023-24, the State aims to screen 5,39,443 individuals, of which 17,141 traits and 1,579 cases of the disease have already been identified. The targets for the subsequent years are equally significant, reflecting the State's commitment to addressing this health challenge," Murali said.

Stating that the State government provides ₹10,000 per month as a social security pension to SCD patients and offers free lifelong medication, he added that currently, 943 SCD patients are benefiting from this social security pension.

Later, the posters and pamphlets prepared on the Sickle Cell Anaemia Eradication Mission were unveiled by the Principal Secretary.

Officials of Health, Medical, Family Welfare and other departments were also present.