

THE MEDICAL GAZETTE

Health For All is a basic human right that needs to be protected at all costs by those who matter. Pakistan Medical Association is doing its bit in this regard and hopes that others will join hands sooner rather than later in this worthy cause.

PAKISTAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



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PMA Central Council wants PMDC to be autonomous

GAZETTE REPORT

THE Central Council of Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) recently met in Islamabad and took stock of the situation prevailing in the domains of healthcare delivery and medical education in the country. After exhaustive discussions, the PMA Central Council, representing elected Central Councilors from all over the country, unanimously urged the federal government to make Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) a powerful, autonomous body to regulate medical education in the country without any political interference.

PMA Center Secretary-General Dr Abdul Ghafoor Shoro said the PMA believed that only an independent and powerful body can raise the standards of medical education in the country in line with international standards. The deteriorating standard of the country's medical education was a direct result of political interference, he said.

The participants of the Central Council meeting were of the view that the government should change the policy of promoting the



concept of a politically controlled regulatory body.

The meeting unanimously asked the government to make the PMDC an autonomous, democratic, transparent and independent body for the improvement of medical education to produce competent doctors in the country and to improve the healthcare delivery system.

The meeting also expressed concern over the rising inflation and devaluation of rupee due to which escalation in the prices of medicine has made it impossible for the poor

people to buy medicines for their treatment. The situation is further deteriorating due to the problems associated with the letters of credit (LCs) and the pharmaceutical companies' demand to the government to further increase the medicine prices. These problems will surely lead to shortage of medicines, it was noted with concern. The Central Council demanded that the government should take appropriate measures immediately to avoid shortage of medicine, and to

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Drug shortage getting worse, warns PMA

GAZETTE REPORT

PAKISTAN Medical Association (PMA) Center Secretary-General Dr Abdul Ghafoor Shoro has voiced concern and distress over the shortage of various medicine, especially life-saving drugs, across Pakistan.

In a press statement, Dr Shoro reminded the government that the PMA had already warned that due to the bar on opening letters of credit (LCs) for importing raw material for the pharmaceutical industry, there is bound to be a shortage of medicine in the market as the entire manufacturing process is dependent on the smooth flow of the supply chain.

Besides, the increasing manufacturing cost owing to the worsening economic situation in the country would also result in

the unavailability and unaffordability of medicines. The PMA official regretted that the government did not pay heed to the warning.

Unfortunately, the government has done nothing to facilitate the pharmaceutical sector, and due to this failure, the problems have grown monumentally, affecting the lives of patients and their families as they are unable to get the prescribed medicines.

Dr Shoro quoted media reports to underscore the magnitude of the problem. "One can well imagine the situation from the reports recently published in a section of the national media that the production of 1,300 drugs has been stopped, and this number can reach up to 2,500 in the coming days as more

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GAZETTE REPORT

Delivering the welcome speeches, PMA Islamabad President Dr Akhtar Bandesha and General Secretary Dr Mubashar Dahi presented the genuine demands of the medical fraternity, which included, among

The scientific and research gala event was widely attended by PMA Islamabad members, consultants, faculty associated

Special sessions were held on global climate change, public health, cardiology, dentistry, modern surgical procedures, medical ethics and others. A large number of scientific papers were presented during the event. Parliamentary Secretary for Climate

Among those who attended the PMA Islamabad Annual Conference were Dr Izhar Chaudhry, Dr Abdul Ghafoor Shoro, Dr Qaiser Sajjad, Dr Ashraf Nizami, Prof Shahzad Ali Khan, Dr Qazi Wasiq, Dr Abdur Rasheed Mian, Dr Shaheen, Dr Ajmal, Dr Luba Hussain, Dr Khurram, Dr Israr, Dr Umar, Dr Javaid, Dr Riaz Janjua, Dr Mahrukh and Dr Abid Hussain Shah.



New COVID data points toward infected animals

Genomic samples suggest animals at in the Chinese city of Wuhan were potential source of the pandemic.

NEWLY released data from early in the COVID-19 pandemic has offered a crucial insight into the outbreak's origins, suggesting that COVID-infected animals were present at a market in Wuhan and could have been a "potential source of human infections".

A pre-print report by a team of international researchers fleshed out analysis of previously unseen genomic samples collected by Chinese scientists at the Huanan market in Wuhan in the early days of the pandemic.

Initially leaked after a meeting of the World Health Organization (WHO) committee studying the origins of the outbreak, it appeared to show a likelihood that racoon dogs and other species were present at the market and potentially infected.

This adds to the body of evidence identifying the Huanan market as the spillover location of Sars-CoV-2 and the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic," said the report.

The latest research on COVID-19's origins came as US President Joe Biden signed into law a bill requiring the release of intelligence materials on potential links between the outbreak and a laboratory in the Chinese city of Wuhan. This follows reports that the US Department of Energy had assessed with "low confidence" that the laboratory may have been linked to the outbreak.

"We need to get to the bottom of COVID-19's origins ... including potential links to the Wuhan Institute of Virology," Biden said in a statement. "In implementing this legislation, my administration will declassify and share as much of that information as possible."

Biden's move came as newly updated genetic material from Wuhan's Huanan market from China's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was briefly released on a globally accessible database. The Chinese CDC presented those findings at a meeting of WHO experts researching the virus's origins.

The new research examined genomic sequences from the newly released material, which was collected at the Wuhan market.

The research looked at samples including swabs from stalls at the market, sewage systems and 18 specific to animals — both frozen carcasses and live — around the site, including strays around the market.

What is significant about the new research is that it identifies high levels of DNA from several species that were not identified as having been tested during the original sampling.

That includes racoon dogs, which it is speculated may have been present at the market before it was cleared early in the outbreak as part of the Chinese health authorities' immediate intervention.

Although some of the material was leaked ahead of the release, the new report adds more detail about other animals present at the market, as well as showing that some of the Sars-CoV-2 positive environmental samples had more animal than human genetic material in them, which the researchers said was consistent with the animals being infected.

The release of the new research followed a statement from the WHO's Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins of Novel Pathogens assessing the importance of what they had been shown.

"The presentations from China CDC and invited international researchers indicated that there were newly available data from the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market," it said.

"Analyses of these data suggest that, apart from Sars-CoV-2 sequences, some samples also contained human DNA, as well as mitochondrial DNA of several animal species, including some that are known to be susceptible to Sars-CoV-2.

"This included DNA from wild raccoon dogs, Malaysian porcupine and bamboo rats among others, in Sars-CoV-2 positive environmental samples.

"Although this does not provide conclusive evidence as to the intermediate host or origins of the virus, the data provide further evidence of the presence of susceptible animals at the market that may have been a source of human infections."

The new material is significant as a search for an intermediary animal host has been one of the two focuses of investigations into COVID's origins along with the lab leak theory. However, scientific consensus on the outbreak has leaned towards the theory that it was most likely zoonotic in origin, jumping from an animal to humans, as has occurred with other similar viruses.

The release of the new data — amid longstanding and well-aided concerns about China's transparency around its own research into the outbreak — leaves many questions unanswered, not the least why it has taken so long for the genetic sequences to emerge.

"The data does point even further to a market origin," Kristian Andersen, an evolutionary biologist at Scripps Research, who attended the WHO meeting and is one of the scientists who has examined the samples, told the journal Science.

Like the new data, the Biden administration's move to declassify US intelligence on the source of the outbreak is unlikely to be the last word in either the scientific debate or the highly polarized political debate over the origins.

While considerable attention was paid to the disclosure that the US Department of Energy had assessed a lab leak as the source — albeit with low confidence, backing a similar assessment by the FBI — a majority of US agencies lean towards the outbreak being a natural event. — *Courtesy: The Guardian*

COVID and unhappiness don't go together

World Happiness Report finds levels of benevolence in all global regions higher than before the pandemic.

IT claimed 6.7 million lives, locked down entire countries and triggered a global economic slump, but COVID-19 has not affected humankind's happiness, an international study has found.

Interviews with more than 100,000 people across 137 countries found significantly higher levels of benevolence in all global regions than before the pandemic. And when asked to evaluate their lives on a scale of one to 10, people on average gave scores just as high in the 2020-22 COVID years as in 2017-19.

Things were slightly worse in Western countries and slightly better in the rest of the world, but overall "the undoubted pains were offset by increases in the extent to which respondents had been able to discover and share the capacity to care for each other in difficult times," the 10th World Happiness Report found.

Global measures of "misery" fell and despite higher death tolls among elderly people, those aged over 60 on average reported improvements in their happiness relative to younger groups.

"It is amazing," said John Helliwell, a professor of economics at the University of British Columbia and a co-editor of the report. "People ended up discovering their neighbors. People were checking in more regularly [with other generations] so that the sense of isolation was not as much as you would expect ... Even during these difficult years, positive emotions have remained twice as prevalent as negative ones, and feelings of positive social support twice as strong as those of loneliness."

Acts of everyday kindness that have been shown to boost happiness, such as helping a stranger, donating to charity and volunteering — activities spurred by the needs of lockdowns — are now above pre-pandemic levels.

The study found the happiness effect of "having someone to count on in times of trouble" increased during the pandemic and since 80% of people surveyed said they did have someone to count on, that had a significant effect.

In the overall happiness league table Finland remained top for the sixth successive year and Afghanistan stayed bottom, a position it held before the return of the Taliban in 2021. It is also the fourth consecutive year in which the UK has dropped down the happiness scores.

The country is in 19th place, sandwiched by Lithuania and the Czech Republic in the top 15pc of happiest states ahead of France, but behind Germany, the US, Australia, Ireland and all the Nordic countries.

The polling by Gallup evaluates what contributes to people's life evaluation scores. GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity and freedom from corruption were found to be the main drivers of happiness. However, some of those most affected by COVID, including homeless people and those who have been institutionalized, were not included in the survey samples.

The study is compiled by economists including Richard Layard, a professor at the London School of Economics, and Jeffrey Sachs, a Columbia University professor. It is perhaps the most high-profile of recent attempts to count subjective wellbeing in an attempt to persuade policymakers to give more weight to happiness. In the UK the Office for National Statistics has been measuring happiness for over a decade.

Critics have cautioned that respondents may have different things in mind when they answer the questions than the researchers, making global comparisons difficult. For example, some people in Finland have suggested "contentment" rather than "happiness" might be a better way to describe their state.

Broader critiques of targeting happiness — the agenda behind the study — include warnings it can backfire as people feel disappointed they are not achieving their goal; concern that happiness now at the cost of the environment could mean misery for future generations; and that there can be a conflict between happiness for some and the human rights of others.

Addressing these views, the report's authors argue "the interests of others and of a sustainable environment are integral to happy lives rather than something that is either additional or in conflict with them".

The latest league table shows a distinct contrast between the West and the global South. Fifteen of the top 20 happiest countries are in Europe. They are joined by the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Israel, although the research was conducted before the latest outbreaks of violence in the Middle Eastern country. Thirteen of the 20 least happy countries were in Africa, alongside Bangladesh, India and Jordan.

The study asks about recent emotions, positive and negative. Positive emotions — laughter, enjoyment and interest — were more than twice as frequent during the pandemic globally than the negative emotions of worry, sadness and anger.

The study also showed that the Netherlands was the country where happiness was shared most equally and there was the smallest gap between the happiest and the least happy. People were generally found to be happier living in countries where the happiness gap is smaller, although not in Afghanistan where the happiness gap was almost as small as in the Netherlands but levels of misery were so widespread. The largest happiness gaps were in the African countries Liberia, the Republic of the Congo and Mozambique.

"The ultimate goal of politics and ethics should be human wellbeing," said Sachs. "The happiness movement shows that wellbeing is not a soft and vague idea, but rather focuses on areas of life of critical importance: material conditions, mental and physical wealth, personal virtues, and good citizenship. We need to turn this wisdom into practical results to achieve more peace, prosperity, trust, civility — and yes, happiness — in our societies."

In Ukraine, recorded benevolence rose to record levels with high scores for donations and the helping of strangers, while falling significantly in Russia. But it was not enough to stem an overall fall in happiness in the invaded country, which was in the bottom half of the league table in 92nd place, based on a three-year average.

'Worry' increased significantly in Ukraine, but remained unchanged in Russia, which overall was in 70th place in the happiness rankings.

The study detected a difference in attitude in Ukraine after Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and the 2022 invasion.

"Despite the magnitude of suffering and damage in Ukraine, life evaluations in September 2022 remained higher than in the aftermath of the 2014 annexation, supported by a much stronger sense of common purpose, benevolence and trust in their leadership," the report said.

"Wellbeing in Ukraine fell by less than it did in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea, and this is thanks in part to the extraordinary rise in fellow feeling across Ukraine as picked up in data on helping strangers and donations," said the co-author Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, director of the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford.

But in 2022 Ukrainians scored their overall wellbeing at 5.1 out of 10, a dip on 2021. That compares with Russians whose scores rose to 5.7. By contrast, the UK scored 6.8 and Finland 7.8. — *Courtesy: The Guardian*

Drug shortage getting worse, warns PMA

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companies are planning, or are forced, to stop production of medicines due to high costs and raw material shortages," he said.

The country's healthcare delivery system is already in a shambles, and shortage of medicines will take the situation from bad to worse. If the required measures were not taken to control the situation, the poor patients will suffer the most.

The current crisis, said Dr Shoro, has added to the burden of fake and spurious that are sold in the markets by the criminal mafias. The state of national health sector is in grave danger as authorities have found samples of over half-a-dozen life-saving medicines, including those used for the treatment of psychiatric illnesses, to be fake and spurious while samples of 30 other drugs are found to be substandard.

The Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) over the past few months is said to have collected samples

from different sources that included retail markets, and their proper testing and examinations revealed disturbing facts. Apart from seven spurious and fake drugs, substandard copies of at least 30 essential and life-saving medicines were found in the market with little check from the relevant authorities and agencies.

The seven fake and spurious medicines included Isoflurane and Alprazolam which are sold under different brand names, said media reports, citing the recent data compiled by DRAP and the Sindh's Drug Testing Laboratory (DTL). They are very crucial medicines and are used as general anesthetic potent tranquilizers. The fake and spurious drugs mean that they do not have any active pharmaceutical ingredient as they mostly contain chalk or starch.

The other spurious samples were found of Meropenem injection, Cefim DS suspension, Glucantime and Tablin capsule along with other medicines. During the

market surveillance in different areas, the reports said, the regulatory field force identified the suspected samples of different pharmaceutical products and sent them for analysis to laboratory. The provincial DTL declared the samples of all the seven medicines as spurious.

The stated manufacturers on the label clarified that they had not manufactured the particular batch of products. On the part of the government, the regulatory field force was directed to increase market surveillance and confiscate the mentioned batch of the product. All pharmacists and chemists working at distributions and pharmacies were directed to immediately check the stock and stop supplying that product.

The people were advised to buy drugs from large medical stores and community pharmacies that usually buy medicines directly from the manufacturers. The need for running medical stores in an organized way with qualified pharmacists cannot be



emphasized enough, said Dr Shoro. There have to be through multiple checks as well as direct contact with reliable manufactures, leaving no chance for any spurious drugs.

Instead of visiting pharmacies near clinics and hospitals, people should approach large pharmacies that directly buy medicines from manufacturers and keep them in temperature-controlled environments to maintain their efficacy, he said. Dr Shoro added that there is a misconception that large pharmacies charge higher prices, but the fact is that they offer medicines at much cheaper rates than random medical stores.

The DRAP findings came only weeks after the DTL reported that all the 18 samples of life-saving drugs confiscated during raids in Karachi and Hyderabad were found to be "spurious and fake". The situation is seriously alarming, said Dr Shoro.

The fake samples included those of life-saving drug Azithromycin, which is used to treat extensively drug resistant (XDR) typhoid.

There were 18 samples collected, and all of them were found to be fake and spurious. It was for the first time that all the collected samples were found to be substandard or of low quality. They all were fake and spurious which means that the medicines seized contained only calcium carbonate or chalk, and no active pharmaceutical ingredient.

Dr Shoro said the business of spurious drugs was nothing but a form of organized crime, and recommended strong action as well as punishment for those involved in this illegal activity.

The latest revelation may shake the very foundations of the healthcare sector because all efforts of patients to go to hospitals, see doctors and pay their high fees, massive government spending on hospitals, and health experts' painstaking research on diagnosis of diseases are likely to go in vain if a prescribed drug does not work because it is fake and counterfeit.

This has put the entire healthcare system at stake, said Dr Shoro. "For instance, an ulcer patient is prescribed a

certain medicine after proper diagnosis by a qualified doctor so that the ailment can be treated. But if the medicine he or she consumes is fake, one can imagine what would happen. His or her minor problem would turn into a cancer or life-threatening disease and we would doubt our whole healthcare system," he said.

Dr Shoro said the PMA in the past had several times engaged with authorities and forwarded its proposals to counter the menace of spurious drugs, but the required action was still awaited. The PMA believes that those involved in such businesses should be charged under Section 302 [premeditated murder] of the Pakistan Penal Code. It is a heinous crime. We need strong legislation against these activities," said the PMA secretary-general.

On behalf of PMA, Dr Shoro demanded that the government should take appropriate measures immediately to avoid an ugly situation, and save the lives of the innocent people of Pakistan.

PMA Central Council wants PMDC to be autonomous

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control the prices of medicines.

The meeting also stressed upon the government to control environmental pollution in the country to save the health of the people. Air pollution is a major problem confronting Pakistan, with cities like Lahore and Karachi ranking among the most polluted worldwide.

According to the latest global Environment Performance Index (EPI) ranking, Pakistan is in the list of countries that suffer from poor air quality. The

emission of carbon from vehicles, factories, generators and burning of garbage is polluting the environment and making the cities unlivable.

In Pakistan, one in 10 deaths in children under the age of five years is caused by air pollution. Due to the air pollution, diseases are spreading, including nasal allergy, sore throat, sinusitis, laryngeal cancer, nasal obstruction, bronchitis and even lungs cancer.

The PMA Central Council urged the government and its relevant agencies to take due steps to bring the situation under control.

ATTENTION PMA BRANCHES

**All affiliated branches and office-bearers of
Pakistan Medical Association,
which is the sole representative of the community of
medical practitioners in the country,
are hereby requested to refrain from giving credence /
approval / sponsorship to various commercial ventures
that are brought to them by any commercial organization.**

**All PMA members are further requested to strictly
adhere to the set out principled stand based on ethics
which will give a uniform impression to the general
public regarding PMA's policy in this regard.**

Dr. Abdul Ghafoor Shoro

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PMA urges care against resurgent COVID-19

GAZETTE REPORT

A STATEMENT issued by the Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) Center has alerted the medical community across the country about some early signs of a possible resurgence of COVID-19.

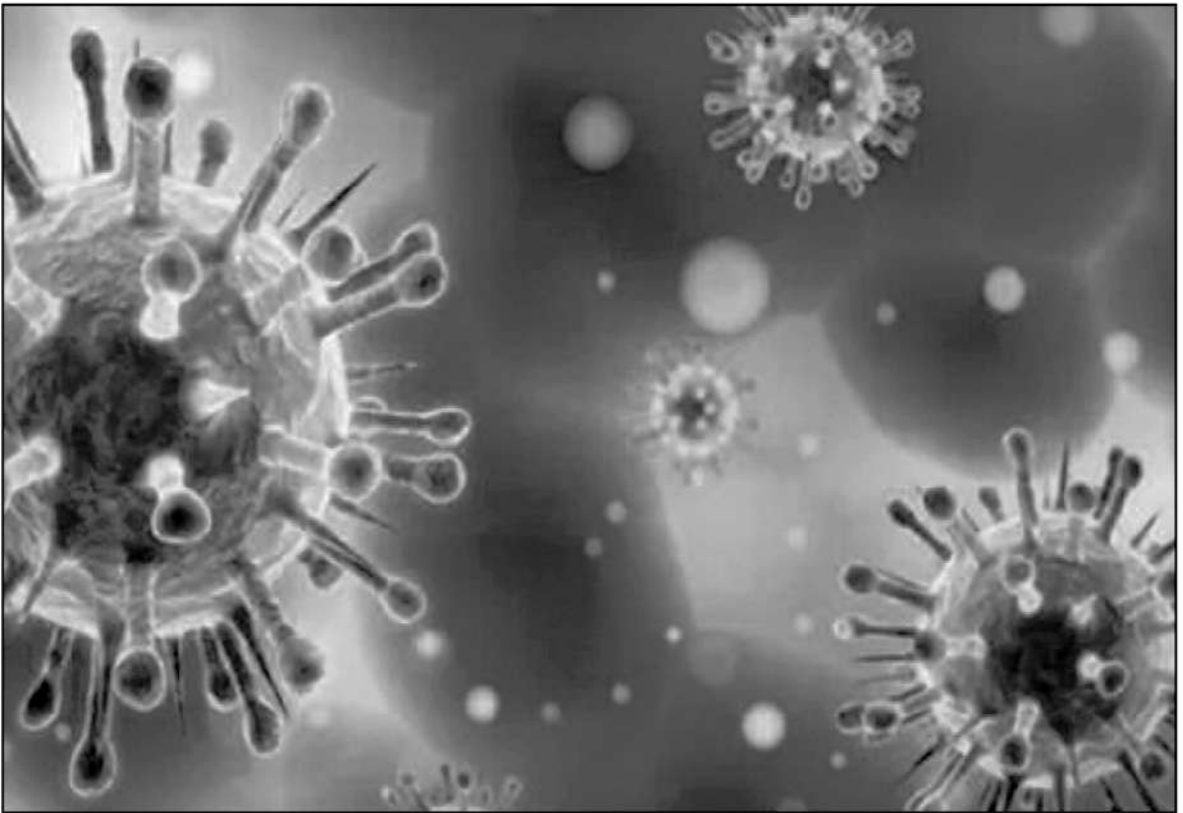
The recent recommendation by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) that people wear masks at crowded public places and healthcare facilities is a reminder that, despite the gains made against COVID-19 — thanks to global vaccination campaigns — the threat from the virus is far from over.

The national positivity rate is almost 3pc, with some patients in critical condition, though any death from the infection has not been reported thus far. It is encouraging that the authorities are focusing on testing, and following the protocols put in place during previous COVID-19 waves. Though the health minister claimed there will be testing and screening of

passengers at all airports, it is at this stage not clear how well these measures will be implemented. It is important that the authorities remain vigilant, not only by following the infection's trajectory and community spread in the country, but also by keeping an eye on reports of variants and hospitalizations abroad.

There are reports of a new variant in Israel, for example, which have prompted health officials there to raise concerns. In India, too, cases are rising, a development which has prompted the authorities in neighboring Nepal to urge caution. Though reports show that the symptoms so far are mild, given how quickly the virus mutates, officials and the health practitioners cannot afford to be complacent. A recent World Health Organization (WHO) statement warned that COVID-19 "continues to evolve".

The world paid a very high price when the pandemic first hit, causing the loss of millions of lives and livelihoods. The



horrors from that time serve as reminders that complacency and ignorance are simply not options. As the world, including developing countries such as Pakistan, grapple with multiple crises, and budgets for healthcare sectors get strained, health authorities and governments everywhere must know that no compromises can be made when it comes to guarding against COVID-19. In an increasingly interconnected world, the failure of one country can reverse the gains made against coronavirus for all nations, the PMA statement concluded.

PMA stresses need to control air pollution

GAZETTE REPORT

THE Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) Center Secretary-General, Dr Abdul Ghafoor Shoro, has said that the worsening quality of air was making life conditions worse for the people. "Air pollution is linked to so many illnesses, including cancer, gastrointestinal disorders and cardiovascular and kidney diseases," he said, stressing that air pollution knows no boundaries and affects everyone, including the policymakers themselves.

It is high time the government took notice of the situation and started implementing measures to improve the air quality, said Dr Shoro at an event held at the PMA House in Karachi in collaboration with the Karachi Citizens' Forum (KCF) to discuss ways to improve the increasingly toxic air quality of Karachi.

Dr Qaiser Sajjad, a former PMA Center secretary-general, speaking on the occasion, said that the toxic air quality of Karachi, especially the inhalation of particulate matter, is the number one public health threat and a silent killer, and it was regrettable that the menace comes under the spotlight only after some tragedy takes place.

He added that there should be no industrial activity in residential areas, and those responsible for operating such undertakings should be punished under the law.

On toxic air's effects on the human body, he explained that it penetrates into the organs, and enters the bloodstream. These chemicals not only negatively affect the human genetic system and immunity, but also have a negative impact on the development of the fetuses.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately seven million premature deaths take place in the world annually because of air

toxicity. It is also the primary agent of climate change and reduces the chances of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), he said.

Citing some estimates, the speakers, including Nargis Rahman and Kulsum Ahmed, said an estimated 128,000 lives were lost every year in Pakistan due to poor air quality, while life expectancy for average Pakistani was going down by 4.3 years.

Highlighting their concerns over the city's poor air quality, the speakers called upon the government to make the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) effective, and set up a mechanism to check and ban release of hazardous emissions in the city.

The speakers regretted that Karachi was among the most polluted and unlivable cities of the world, in addition to

being among the top 10 cities with very high toxic air quality. As Karachi does not get enveloped in a Lahore-like smog, citizens and environmental authorities live in a state of denial of its toxic air quality, they said.

At a similar event held earlier, Dr Abdul Ghafoor Shoro and Dr Qaiser Sajjad highlighted the degrading quality of environmental pollution in Karachi which was causing a number of ailments in the in the general public. The suffering

of the people was going from bad to worse, he said.

Studies have directly linked heart, lung, skin and brain diseases with poor air quality, they said, adding that the situation may get worse as the WHO expects climate change to increase the incidence of malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea and heat stress, resulting in 250,000 deaths each

year between 2030 and 2050.

Sources of air pollution in Karachi included emissions from factories, air conditioners and generators, burning of waste and unsafe construction practices.

During the event the Sindh government came under fire for showing lack of concern and action towards growing environmental degradation in Karachi, which has become "a bowl of poison". Half of the city's air pollution, it was pointed out, was caused by vehicular

traffic. "We gradually need to phase out vehicles with internal combustion engines as vehicular emissions are a major source of air pollution. Burning fuel creates harmful byproducts, like nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide as well as carbon dioxide," they said.

Other speakers included Sabiha Khan, Yasir Hussain, Muhammad Tauheed,



PMA advises rational use of antibiotics

GAZETTE MATTER

A SPOKESPERSON for Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) has alerted the general population as well as the community of medical practitioners against the misuse of antibiotics in society. Repeated and improper uses of antibiotics are primary causes of increase in drug-resistant bacteria in humans and animals, reminded the PMA spokesperson in a press statement.

Misuse of antibiotics jeopardizes the usefulness of essential drugs. Decreasing inappropriate antibiotic use is the best way to control antimicrobial resistance (AMR) as children are of particular concern because they have the highest rates of antibiotic use, he said, adding that, according to estimates, 700,000 deaths occur as a result of various types of infections each year worldwide.

Antimicrobials, including antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals and antiparasitics, are medicines used to prevent and treat infections in humans, animals and plants. All around the world, bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites are changing, and no longer respond to medicines used to treat the infections they cause.

This antimicrobial resistance makes infections harder to treat which increases the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death. Antimicrobial resistance emerges naturally, usually through genetic changes. However, overuse and misuse of antimicrobials in humans, livestock, and agriculture have accelerated the process, as has a lack of clean water and sanitation, and inadequate infection prevention and control.

The PMA spokesperson said the emerging scenario was a serious problem and one with the potential to develop into a global health crisis.

The good news is that each individual can act to slow down the rate of AMR. One of the most effective ways is by making sure we use our antibiotics appropriately. This helps ensure that medicines remain effective not only in dealing with serious illnesses but also common infections, the PMA spokesperson said.

“Antibiotic resistant infections will kill an estimated 300 million people worldwide — more than from cancer — by 2050 unless proper and urgent action is taken by all concerned. The total estimated costs for management of AMR infections would spiral to \$100 trillion. Antimicrobials are also used selectively in poultry, plant agriculture and commercial fish and seafood farming. Contamination of human food of animal origin (meat and milk), with drug-resistant bacteria may be transferred to consumers. With a rise of bacteria resistant to antibiotics in the last decade, many bacterial infections are becoming resistant to the most commonly prescribed antibiotic treatments,” said the press statement.

“COVID-19 worsened the habit of bad prescriptions with both healthcare professionals and the public responsible for using indiscriminately the powerful and precious broadspectrum antibiotics with impunity. Every time a person takes antibiotics, sensitive bacteria are killed, but resistant ones may be left to grow and multiply,” reminded the PMA spokesperson.

“Unnecessary antibiotics have to be curtailed urgently. In Pakistan antibiotic use is alarmingly high both in humans and animals. Approximately, 70-90pc of patients for viral upper respiratory tract infections (URTIs) are prescribed antibiotics unnecessarily that are mostly self-limiting. Resistant infections due to these superbugs cause thousands of deaths and hospitalization each year,” said the press statement.

“We must resolve to act urgently by taking steps that will curtail antibiotic misuse. AMR is a global health issue and Pakistan is raising awareness on the need to preserve the power of antibiotics through appropriate use during this week and beyond. It is not too late to reduce the impact of AMR and we want to highlight that all healthcare professionals and the public have a part to play in preserving the effectiveness of antibiotics. By reducing the spread of infections and changing how we produce, prescribe and use these medicines, we

6

SMART
FACTS
ABOUT
ANTIBIOTIC
USE

1



Antibiotics are
LIFE-**SAVING** drugs

2



Antibiotics only
treat **BACTERIAL**
infections

3



Some ear infections
DO NOT require
an antibiotic

4



Most sore throats
DO NOT require
an antibiotic

5



Green colored mucus
is **NOT** a sign that an
antibiotic is needed

6



There are potential
RISKS when taking any
prescription drug

Talk to your clinician about when and how to safely use antibiotics
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can reduce the impact and limit the spread of antibiotic resistance,” concluded the PMA spokesperson.

In another statement, PMA Karachi noted with concern that antibiotic-resistant germs were being routinely found in food being served in and around hospitals in the city.

A study carried out on the food being sold in and outside 10 public-sector hospitals of the city showed that it was unfit for human consumption and that the germs contaminating it had resistance against a number of commonly used antibiotics.

The samples were picked up from the Civil Hospital Karachi, Landhi Medical Complex, Abbasi Shaheed Hospital, Sindh Government Hospital, Liaquatabad, Qatar Hospital, Sindh Government Hospital, UP Mor, Lyari General Hospital, Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre, Dow International Hospital, and the Sindh Social Security Hospital.

The study identified dumping of waste, especially medical waste, in the open, lack of infection control measures in

healthcare settings, mixing of sewerage lines with water mains, and poor hygiene practices of food handlers as major contributors to the evolution of these germs and their spread.

“It is important to recall that concerns over poor medical waste disposal practices have frequently been highlighted by PMA,” the statement said, stressing the need to take the necessary steps without any delay.

Meanwhile, PMA Center Secretary-General Dr Abdl Ghafoor Shoro has reacted strogly to the reports that medical waste generated at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) was ending up in Islamabad’s ‘black market’ for reuse, calling the practice not only disturbing but also a symptom of a much bigger problem in a country where infectious diseases are rampant.

According to the media report, a vendor hired by PIMS to incinerate the medical waste on hospital premises has been involved in the sale of infectious material, such as discarded syringes and blood bags, with the help of the hospital

staff.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 15pc of the waste generated by hospitals and other healthcare facilities is hazardous, and can be infectious, toxic and even radioactive. The remaining 85pc is considered non-hazardous.

In a country like Pakistan, however, where laws and administrative controls pertaining to healthcare are weak, there is always the danger of unscrupulous elements trying to make a quick buck by recycling hazardous material for sale in the black market. Very few hospitals follow the international medical practice of segregating hospital waste at source and disposing of it properly.

This carelessness has been put down to high costs, ignorance and a general apathy towards patient welfare. The effect has been disastrous. For instance, the reuse of contaminated syringes is believed to have contributed significantly to the spread of blood-borne diseases, such as hepatitis C, across the country, which is no surprise, given that large sections of the

population have evinced a preference for ‘injections’ over regular medication.

Hospitals are not the only place where medical waste is generated. Diagnostic laboratories, animal hospitals, blood banks and collection service centers, too, produce tons of medical refuse every day. Unfortunately, incinerators are in short supply, not only in the smaller towns and villages but also in major cities such as Lahore, Karachi and the capital itself.

The proper management of healthcare waste, especially hazardous material, is crucial for preventing an adverse impact on health and the environment. But that cannot be ensured without an appropriate and effective legal framework for medical waste management in accordance with international best practices as well as trained human resource.

Such a framework should include regular monitoring by the health authorities to ensure that all medical units in the country are complying with the rules of medical waste disposal, concluded Dr Abdul Ghafoor Shoro.

PMA Punjab condemns harassment of doctors

GAZETTE REPORT

THE Executive Council of Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) Punjab recently held a session at the PMA House in Lahore which was attended by all the presidents, general secretaries and provincial councilors from all the member PMA Chapters in Punjab. After discussing the prevailing healthcare scenario in the province in detail, the meeting unanimously adopted various resolutions.

The meeting condemned the harassment of doctors at private clinics by abusive drug inspectors. The meeting voiced its reservations regarding the directives issued in this regard by the Chief Drug Controller, and called for the immediate withdrawal of all such orders.

The meeting condemned the pathetic performance of the Punjab Government Servants Housing Foundation, and lamented the longstanding and unaddressed issues of maladministration which was causing



physical, emotional and economic distress to the retired pensioners. The meeting demanded that the affairs of the Foundation should be streamlined, and houses should be allotted to the pensioners as was promised to them.

The meeting noted with concern the lack of merit in the appointment of the vice-chancellor of the University of Health Sciences (UHS), and regretted that the decision had caused widespread

disappointment in the healthcare community.

During the Executive Council meeting of PMA Punjab, the newly-designed website of PMA Punjab was also inaugurated with access to the general public.



THE Health Minister of Punjab, Prof Javaid Akram, held detailed deliberations at the PMA House in Lahore regarding the various problems being faced by the healthcare professionals in the province. The PMA was represented on the occasion by Prof Amjad, Prof Ashraf Nizami and Dr Shahid Malik.

PMA leader delivers lecture at Harvard

GAZETTE REPORT

RENOWNED fistula surgeon and former secretary-general of PMA Center Dr Shershah Syed was recently invited to deliver a talk on 'Maternal and Child Health in Global Health Delivery' by the Harvard Medical School (HMS) in Boston, which was established in 1782 and is the third oldest school of medicine in the United States.

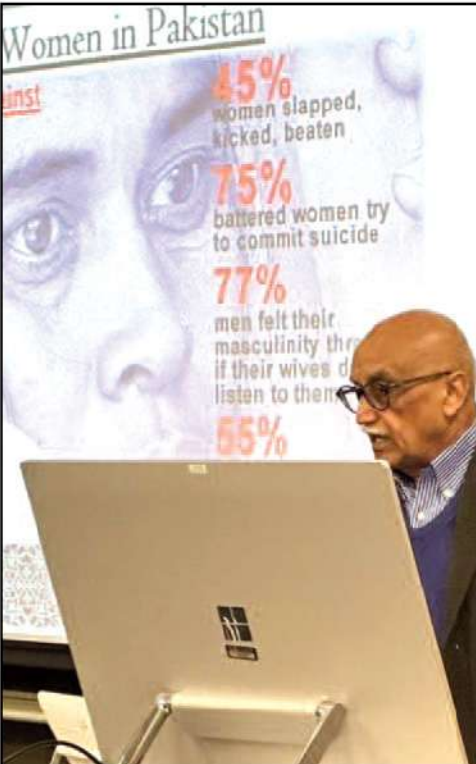
The lecture revolved around the issues of child marriage, honor killings, maternal deaths and genital tract fistula.

Dr Syed kept the audience engaged

with anecdotes highlighting the disconnect with ground realities of policymakers and those who are supposee to execute these policies in developing countries like Pakistan.

Dr Syed thanked the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologist (RCOG) for having given him a fellowship 26 years ago to go to Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia and learn how to repair genital tract fistula.

He also thanked the United Nations Population Fund (UNFP) and the Fistula Foundation for helping fistula patients in Pakistan and across the world.



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References:

1. Efficacy and tolerability of conversion to monotherapy with lamotrigine compared with valproate and carbamazepine in patients with epilepsy. Fikhtori et al. Epilepsy & Behavior 5 (2004) 522-538.
2. Effect of Antiepileptic Drugs on Bodyweight: Overview and Clinical Implications for the Treatment of Epilepsy. CNS Drugs 2009; 17 (1): 1.
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Full prescribing information is attached.

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PMA Mirpurkhas and Karachi organize 5th joint conference

GAZETTE MATTER

THE Mirpurkhas and Karachi Chapters of Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) recently held their fifth Joint Medical Conference at the Bhitai Dental and Medical College in Mirpurkhas. The theme this year was: 'Healthcare is a right, not a privilege: People have lost everything; do not let them lose hope.'

The conference, which also comprised several scientific sessions, was widely attended by doctors, faculty members and medical students from across the province, including Karachi. PMA Center Secretary-General Dr Abdul Ghafoor Shoro also attended the event.

PMA Mirpurkhas President Dr Chetan Das Hotwani and General Secretary Dr Manthar Thebo were the driving force behind the event, while PMA Sindh was represented by General Secretary Dr Zaman Baloch, Vice-President Dr Bashir Khaskhely and Joint Secretary Dr Shankar Lal.

Representing PMA Karachi were Dr Shershah Syed, Dr Ilamid Marzoor, Dr Shoaib Sobani, Dr Sonia Naqvi, Dr Altaf Hussain Khatri, Dr Aftab Ahmed, Dr Abdul Rasheed Lakhair, Dr Anjum Turabi, Dr Sidra Ahmed and others.



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The advertisement features a group of children in school uniforms washing their hands at a long sink. Above them, several boxes of Safeguard Complete 5 soap are displayed in various colors (blue, pink, yellow, green). The Safeguard logo and the Pakistan Medical Association logo are also present. The website address www.commandersafeguard.com is at the bottom.