

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1232  
ANSWERED ON:08.12.2004  
VACCINE FOR INFLUENZA  
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**Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:**

- (a) whether the Government is aware that the `Influenza` , an infectious disease which affects more than a billion people and kills lakhs worldwide annually;
- (b) if so, the measures taken to tackle the said disease;
- (c) whether any vaccine is available in our country for the disease particularly in Government hospitals;
- (d) if so, the details thereof ; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor?

**Answer**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE ( SMT. PANABAKA LAKSHMI)

(a) to (e) As reported by Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Influenza has been considered as one of the unconquered scourges of mankind as it causes frequent epidemics and periodic pandemics. It is estimated that annually around 0.5 to 1 million persons die due to Influenza epidemics worldwide.

Considering the Public Health importance of influenza, World Health Organization (WHO) established a network of National Influenza Centres all over the world to assist in planning for possible recurrence of an influenza pandemic and to devise control method to limit the spread and severity of seasonal epidemics. As a part of this programme, it has set up WHO flunet for disseminating update reports on global influenza situation, current vaccines and antivirals. Three centers viz. National Institute of Virology, Pune, Haffkine Institute, Bombay and Central Research Institute, Kasauli are recognized by World Health Organisation (WHO) as the National Influenza Centre in India for surveillance. Recently, ICMR has developed a proposal for multi- site monitoring of Human Influenza Virus in the country, which proposes to launch an epidemiological and virological surveillance in the country with an aim to characterize the prevalent Human Influenza Virus strains in patients with acute respiratory infections in different geographical areas of the country.

Currently available Influenza vaccines are of three types: Whole virus vaccines consisting of inactivated viruses, split virus vaccines and sub-unit vaccine. Among healthy adults appropriate Influenza vaccines achieve protection rate of about 50-80%. However, Influenza A viruses undergo frequent changes in their surface antigens. As a consequence, new vaccines against Influenza must be designed every year to match the circulating strains that are most likely to cause the next epidemic. Further, the vaccine is needed to be given every year and each dose costs about Rs.600/-. Consequently, even in industrialized countries large proportion of population at risk do not receive influenza vaccine.