

## **Press Release**

### **INDIAN ASSOCIATION OF DERMATOLOGISTS VENEREOLOGISTS & LEPROLOGISTS (IADVL)**

**New Delhi**

**Headline:** IADVL, the world's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest Association of Dermatologists & Indian's largest official body of Dermatologists observes "World Skin Health Day" on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2018 to highlight to the general Indian public on Skin hygiene (Swatch aur Swasth Twatcha), misuse/abuse of topical steroid creams and prevention of quackery.

#### **1. Community Outreach.**

IADVL has a wing dedicated to Community outreach programs which not only help in taking quality skin care to the rural remote areas but also promote awareness on skin hygiene, equipping the local medical personnel to manage the common skin conditions and to refer the complicated cases to higher referral centers.

IADVL collaborates with National Leprosy Eradication Programme of the Government of India to help the reduce transmission of Leprosy and work towards its eradication.

It is in continuation of this endeavor to reach to the length & breadth of the country a Skin Safar, knowledge campaign about awareness on skin hygiene & diseases, early detection & treatment of Leprosy, awareness & eradication of the social stigma attached to Vitiligo(Leucoderma) is planned from Kashmir to Kanyakumari over a period of 3months.

#### **2. Prevention of Misuse/ abuse of Topical steroid creams.**

In India there is a rampant misuse and abuse of topical steroid creams by not only the rural populace but also the educated people in urban areas. This menace is due to the lax enforcement of regulations by the concerned authorities, flourishing quackery and ignorance on part of the general public. The misuse / abuse of topical steroid creams not only happens in the treatment of skin infections by bacteria & fungus and also unfortunately happens to lighten one's skin colour in an unscientific, hazardous manner. The irrational misuse/abuse of steroid creams in fungal infections has lead to the dubious distinction of India harboring the superbug of fungus, resistant to most of the modalities of existing antifungal treatment.

#### **Epidemic of Fungal Infections**

Dermatologists and family physicians have been noticing an unusual increase in the Fungal (commonly called as ringworm infections among the public) across the country over the past 5 -6

years. These infections have been very extensive, highly contagious and resistant to almost all varieties of treatment causing a huge burden on the healthcare in India. Though there are multiple factors responsible for this increase of epidemic proportions, the single most significant reason is the rampant abuse of the irrational unscientific combination steroid creams which the patients buy over the counter or use from their relatives & friends.

Public education posters and pamphlets have been developed in 12 languages and distributed to the target population, all over India through the dermatology clinics. Regular scientific sessions have been conducted in almost all the conferences to update the dermatologists about the correct management strategies of this infection. Educative programs have been conducted for the family physicians across the country to sensitize them towards the right method of treating this infection and about strict avoidance of misuse of steroid containing creams.

To contain the threat of the fungal super-bug, IADVL has constituted ITATSA (IADVL Task force Against Topical Steroid Abuse) and IADVL Task-force Against Recalcitrant Tinea (ITART) to develop strategies to educate the doctors, pharmacists, general public about general measures to be adopted and against the usage of steroid combination creams, which do not have any role in the treatment of fungal or any skin infections.

Members of ITATSA have approached the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) several times and have explained the alarming situation. Following inaction on the part of DCGI, the association has filed a Public Interest Litigation in the Delhi High court, the second hearing of which will be on 12th April 2018. Owing to the strong association of stubborn fungal infections (Fungal super-bug) with abuse of irrational hazardous steroid containing creams, members of the task force have written several articles in various national and international dermatology journals. Several lectures have been delivered by IADVL members all over the globe. There is widespread advocacy by the IADVL regarding the misuse/abuse of such creams.

The International League of Dermatological Societies (ILDS) has issued a support and solidarity letter to IADVL highlighting the abuse of irrational steroid containing creams which shows the seriousness of the situation.

The abuse of steroid creams to lighten one's skin color, not produces undesirable side-effects in the person's body but also aggravates the social evil of quest for fair skin. This quest has many gullible young women & men fall prey to the menace of abuse of steroid resulting a damaged skin and a

damaged psyche. Country wide IADVL member dermatologists listen to such heart-breaking stories of topical steroid abuse patients.

### **Highlights:**

The moot take home points for media are that the abuse of steroid creams and steroid combination creams is unchecked because the Health Ministry (DCGI) is not taking timely, adequate remedial steps. Pharmaceutical companies are taking undue advantage of the situation and are blatantly manufacturing these creams knowing very well that they are hazardous and irrational. Steroids should be 'Schedule H' drugs but the government has kept them out of the schedule H list for questionable purposes as pointed out by the PIL filed by the IADVL. ITATSA has been created and continues to work to root out the evil of irrational steroid combination creams for wrongly treating fungal infections and also for their abuse as skin fairness creams.

### **3. Prevention of Quackery in the field of Dermatology**

Dermatology is one fertile ground where quackery is flourishing due to lax regulation & blind eye of authorities. There was an unfortunate event in the recent years of death of a medical student who underwent hair restoration surgery in an unauthorized center and at the hands of unqualified personnel. To prevent such incidents, IADVL has constituted a task force against quackery ITAQ, (IADVL Taskforce Against Quackery) which educates the general public on quackery and also to liaise with concerned authorities to eliminate quackery.

\*Quackery in Dermatology\* is a big menace as unqualified individuals claim themselves as Skin Specialists (Dermatologists), Cosmetologists, Trichologists, etc. The issue is complicated by grant of Qualifications to Non-Doctors by certain Universities & Autonomous institutions, which is actually not recognised by Medical Council of India (MCI) or by State medical councils. Any doctor who practices and prescribes medicines about which he is not qualified in and not registered the council constituted by law is a mere pretender to the knowledge in that system and is a quack. To be a qualified Dermatologist or a skin specialist requires years of rigorous training with 5 ½ years as Undergraduate & followed by post graduation in a MCI recognised dermatology department for another 2 to 3 years. And then they are called as MCI qualified Dermatologist.

A Supreme Court ruling in 1996 defines anyone practising modern medicine without training in the discipline, even if they are trained in alternative systems of medicine as quacks. The Indian Medical Council Act of 1956 regulates practice of allopathic medicine. Section 15 (2)(b) requires that only those who are registered on state medical register alone

can practice Allopathic medicine and secondly the prohibition is directed against every person who is not registered on any state medical register and all such person are precluded from practising allopathic medicine. The punishment under section 15 (3) is in respect of contravention of any provision of subsection.

\*There is acute lack of awareness regarding threat to nation's health from quackery. Such quackery by pseudo-dermatologists in Dermatology practices is mushrooming for last few decades and they give bad and unrecognised form Skin treatments, Cosmetology Treatments including Lasers, Hair Treatments and Hair Transplants etc and ultimately end up with bad complications to no treatable skin conditions.\*

To fight against such quackery and to make common people aware of such quackery Indian Association of Dermatologists, Venereologists and Leprologists (IADVL) which is second largest association of Dermatologists in world has started its first Taskforce Against Quackery known as ITAQ, which is taking extra care to identify such quackery and are fighting against them. We urge the common people to identify IADVL Life Members as recognised Medical Service providers in the field of Skin and related conditions before starting any Skin and Cosmetic Skin treatments. For Further Information can mail to [ITAQ.NATIONAL@GMAIL.COM](mailto:ITAQ.NATIONAL@GMAIL.COM) or visit <http://www.iadvl.org/> .

\*Please remember to see a Recognised Dermatologist only for any Skin, Hair, Nail and aesthetic Skin and hair treatments and be well and safe by the safe hands of Qualified MCI Dermatologists only\*

#### **4. Insurance coverage for skin conditions**

Certain skin conditions like extensive Psoriasis and Pemphigus are not only life threatening but also emotionally wrenching to the patient & family. Biologics, useful in such conditions are beyond the reach of common man because of the high cost. In the state of Tamil Nadu, these drugs are available to the general public free of cost in the Government run hospitals. We request Insurance regulatory authorities to consider this category of medicines under Insurance cover as it would help in reducing the morbidity & mortality of these conditions.

Keywords: Dermatology, IADVL, Skin, hygiene, Leprosy, Steroid abuse, schedule-H, Quackery

#### **For further reading:**

<http://www.iadvl.org/>

<http://www.iadvl.org/itatsa.php>

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