

Sanofi hosts virtual Pediatric Vaccine Conference to highlight range of vaccine-preventable diseases

Karachi – August 22, 2020. International disease experts as well as key opinion leaders of Pakistan’s medical community addressed the third Pediatric Vaccine Conference (PVC 2020), hosted virtually by Sanofi Pakistan. Topics discussed in the conference ranged from possible increase in polio cases in Pakistan to Meningitis and reasons for low vaccine coverage in the country.

Over 150 healthcare professionals joined the conference from all over Pakistan. Dr. Ali Faisal Saleem (Asst. Professor, Aga Khan University Hospital, Karachi), Prof. Sajid Maqbool, (Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics at Institute of Child) and Prof. Haroon Hamid (Chairman & Professor of Pediatrics King Edward Medical University & Mayo Hospital Lahore) attended PVC 2020 as National Speakers.

Dr. Ali Faisal Saleem discussed the issues behind vaccine refusal and delay in vaccine acceptance, low Vaccination Coverage Rate (VCR) in Pakistan (*both pre and post COVID 19*) and the need for the development of strategies, including the importance of liaison between stakeholders and targeting actual issues behind low VCR.

Prof. Sajid Maqbool shared the burden of bacterial meningitis in Pakistan. He shared data from the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) which reflects annual fatality rate of 23,000 to 25,000 in children due to bacterial meningitis in Pakistan. Prof. Maqbool further added that there is a high risk of neurological disabilities and rapid progression to death in children under 1 year due to Meningococcal disease.

International speakers Maria Carmen B. Nievera, (Regional Medical Expert for PPH Vaccines, Asia & JAPAC Region, Sanofi) & Sherlock Lai (Regional Medical Expert Asia & JAPAC, Sanofi) presented regional and international perspective on vaccine preventable diseases.

Sherlock discussed the burden of invasive meningococcal disease among Asian countries. He shared examples of countries which have implemented meningococcal vaccination at mass level, helping them to significantly reduce the burden of meningococcal disease.

Prof., Sajid Maqbool and Sherlock unanimously concluded that meningococcal vaccination is the safe, beneficial and cost-effective intervention against meningococcal disease, endorsed by International bodies like the World Health Organization (WHO) and Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Prof. Iqbal Ahmed Memon (Head of Pediatrics Sir Syed Hospital Karachi Pakistan) and Prof. Ejaz Ali Khan (Chief Department of Pediatrics, Shifa International Hospital) attended PVC 2020 as expert panelists.

While discussing the current situation of Diphtheria Pertussis and Tetanus (DPT) vaccine coverage in different provinces of Pakistan, Prof Haroon Hamid revealed that Pakistan is third among countries with the most unvaccinated and under-vaccinated children.

Speaking on Polio cases among Asian countries, Maria Carmen noted that Pakistan and Afghanistan are the only countries still grappling with the burden of polio and that there is a likelihood of a rise in Polio cases later this year due to missed doses of polio vaccine during Covid-19. Sharing strategies implemented by Polio-free countries and the recommendation of international bodies, she emphasized the role of injectable polio vaccine.

During the Q&A session, Prof. Ejaz Khan and Prof Iqbal Memon answered questions and highlighted the importance of routine vaccination to increase vaccine coverage in Pakistan. They cautioned that delayed or missed vaccination will increase disease burden in developing countries.

Chairman of the conference Prof. Tahir Masood Ahmad (Professor Emeritus, The Children's Hospital, Lahore) moderated the conference while Dr. Zeeshan Hassan (Medical Lead, Sanofi Pakistan) concluded the event by commending the speakers for their valuable input during the discussion.

About Sanofi

Sanofi is dedicated to supporting people through their health challenges. We are a global biopharmaceutical company focused on human health. We prevent illness with vaccines, provide innovative treatments to fight pain and ease suffering. We stand by the few who suffer from rare diseases and the millions with long-term chronic conditions.

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