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Lesson Learnt from Nuclear Disasters - Health Hazards and its Prevention

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The United Nations Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO) defines a disaster as “a serious disruption of the functioning of a society, causing widespread human, material, or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected society to cope using its own resources.”

Number of nuclear disasters has occurred in the world which include worst disaster of Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing, Chernobyl disaster and Fukushima tragedy.

Acute Radiation Syndrome also known as radiation sickness caused by high dose of penetrating radiation. The three classic ARS Syndromes are: Bone Marrow Syndrome, Gastrointestinal (GI) Syndrome and Cardiovascular (CV)/ Central Nervous System (CNS) syndrome. Survival is extremely unlikely in case of GI syndrome whereas death may occur within two weeks in case of Cardiovascular syndrome.

Human beings are badly affected from head to toe by radiation exposure. There may be hair loss in clumps, Damage to nerve cells leading to seizures, thyroid carcinoma, increased long term risk for leukaemia, lymphoma, sterility, and radiation burn etc.

The best prevention for radiation sickness is to minimize the exposure dose. This can be achieved by increasing the distance from the radiation source and early evacuation. We have to find out and respect the regulations regarding production, transport, handling and storage of radioactive substances. In case of nuclear fallout, stay in house/ shelter as advised. If a nuclear explosion occurs- take shelter behind a solid wall and if you are outside, lie down in a ditch facing the ground and protect your face with your arms.

Biography:

Athar Ansari after completing Doctor of Medicine course in Community Medicine at the Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India, he joined the faculty in the Department of Community Medicine, J.N. Medical College. He is also involved in the research activities directed towards micronutrient deficiencies, HIV/AIDS, and disaster management. He has got 120 papers published and presented 140 papers in the conferences. He has been Coordinator/Principal Investigator/ Co-investigator/Supervisor of various prestigious projects of different agencies like UNICEF, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL), Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), New Delhi.