FSSAI launches Diet4Life initiative to create ecosystem for IEMF patients

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During the National Conclave on Nutrition Security - Convergence and Partnerships, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) also convened stakeholders about Diet4Life - an initiative to create an ecosystem for providing comprehensive services to patients with inborn errors of metabolism (IEM). This initiative provides a platform to import special diets for IEM, since these diets are not available in India.

The Diet4Life initiative is a collaborative effort of the country's apex food regulator, the ministry of health and family welfare and other stakeholders including the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), the Indian Dietetic Association (IDA), the Indian Society for Inborn Errors of Metabolism (ISIEM), the Metabolic Errors and Rare Diseases organisation of India (MERD), the Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP), the National Neonatology Forum (NNF), the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the Indian Society of Paediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (ISPGHAN) and the Infant and Young Child Nutrition Council of India (IYNCI) to ensure a holistic service for IEM patients, with the facilities of diagnosis, treatment and management of IEM.

IEM is a life-threatening condition, in which the patient is unable to metabolise certain nutrients and thus suffers from cognitive and physical disabilities for life. Such children have special dietary needs, which, if unmet, will result in irreversible cognitive disorders and physical disabilities.

In fact, without special diets, children born with IEM would often not survive infancy. It is estimated that IEM affects over 30,000 children in India, but in the absence of adequate screening facilities for this disorder, 30,000 diagnosed cases most likely represent only the tip of the iceberg.
As it progresses, the patients have now started getting the products. Under this initiative, a series of awareness as well as training programmes have also been planned by the joint efforts of the mentioned stakeholders. A few of the awareness and training programmes have already been conducted.

The stakeholders are now working the backward integration to sustain and assist the holistic care and support to IEM patients by strengthening and upgrading the existing IEM laboratories.