FSSAI LAUNCHES DIET4LIFE INITIATIVE TO CREATE ECOSYSTEM FOR IEM PATIENTS

Dated: 22.10.2017 (Sunday)  E-Paper

Months after the Centre kicked-off a programme on a pilot basis at a Vellore hospital in Tamil Nadu to screen newborns to identify children with inborn errors of metabolism (IEM), the Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched Diet4Life initiative to create ecosystem for patients suffering from such rare diseases.

The regulator has identified 15 IEM conditions under the project for which special diets will be imported since these diets are not available in India. These disorders, which impact a small section of consumers, especially babies, occur due to single gene defect leading to abnormalities in the synthesis of proteins, carbohydrates and fats.

A senior official from the Authority said that the Diet4Life initiative is a collaborative effort of the FSSAI, the Health Ministry, 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) and the Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP) to ensure a holistic service for IEM patients, with the facilities of diagnosis, treatment and management of IEM.

The other stakeholders in the initiative are 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).

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.

It is hoped that the Union Health Ministry's funded Vellore project to screen such child would help in finding actual numbers as also ensure early intervention aimed to increase quality of his/her life and even prevent death.

Among various tests, the test for the IEM will also be conducted by taking blood sample of the baby within 72 hours of birth. "This will help start treatment early and provide interventional treatment," said a senior official from the Health Ministry.