

MEDICAL COVER DURING XVII INDIAN ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION

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The 17th I.A.E. had last minute inclusion of only one physician, joining the team at Mauritius on 17th Dec.97. The total number of MI Room attendance from 18.12.97 to 31.12.98 was 895 with an average of about 69 cases per month, which is quite high for the place like Antarctica. All cases responded well to the medications. One case, HMT Ghatge.R.V, a wintering member from Indian Army, suffered from Infective Hepatitis on 28th Jan98 and had to be sent back to India along with Summer team.

The bulk number of cases were of Gastro Intestinal disorders, (238 nos. mainly gastritis, dyspepsia, diarrhea etc) Dermatological manifestations, (160 nose mainly allergic, dryness, Seborrhea and infections etc) and Musculo-Skeletal problems (171 nos., mainly myalgia, arthralgia, polyalgia, injuries etc.). The high number of Gastro-intestinal and Dermatological incidences are attributable to very old and expiry dated food material available for consumption. Five members of convoy team on 16th Oct and six members at Maitri on 21st Dec, suffered from acute food poisoning in addition to few earlier isolated cases, the significant being that of cook KL Bhattacharya on 15th Aug 98. All cases recovered with medications. Prohibiting consumption of suspected food items could prevent further incidences. Most of injury cases were of minor nature, except that of Mr. MM Singh, who had fracture of patella (rt.) on 11th May and H.M.T. Rattan Singh, who sustained injury to his left knee with haemarthrosis. Both cases required POP cylinder/cast and recovered completely. Such cases are normal in Antarctica considering the circumstance and nature of work being

carried out here. There were 18 cases of fever, occurring repeatedly among the vulnerable members. Other infections, including that of Respiratory system, were of minor nature and responded well to the treatment. Two cases of Hemorrhoids were detected, one being from the summer member, and responded to conservative treatment. There were 41 cases of various types of cold injuries/effects (10 chilblains, 8 frostbite, 13 eye manifestations and 10 cases of U.V irradiation.) occurring repeatedly among the vulnerable group of logistic team, who had to work outdoor in very hostile Antarctic conditions. All cases recovered completely. There were no major E.N.T./Dental/psychological problems except few members complained of disturbed sleep cycle, which could be controlled by persuasion and without any medication.

We faced shortage of essential/common medicines during the period. Our Russian counterpart extended all possible help to overcome the problem.

In addition to above, medical aid and vital life saving drugs were provided to the victims of Russian helicopter crash on 1st June'98, resulting in death of 5 members and serious life threatening injuries to 4 members. Five packets of life saving and other essential medicines/I.V. Drips/Surgical/Anesthesia items were rushed to the site on 2nd June'98 by another Russian helicopter. Our medical assistance was highlighted in Russian press and also appeared in Maharashtra Herald (Pune) dated 17th June'98.