

Eliminating iodine deficiency disorders in slum communities - A reality or dream?

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Iodine deficiency is an important global public health problem and considered as the single greatest preventable cause of mental retardation. WHO's role in eliminating this under-publicized yet devastating deficiency has been crucial and its' partnership with UNICEF, ICCIDD (International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders), international and bilateral agencies and the salt industry has helped countries set up permanent national salt iodization programs. The target is the elimination of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) through universal salt iodization, the primary intervention strategy which emphasizes on daily consumption of adequately iodized salt. Even though impressive progress has been made in eliminating iodine deficiency disorders from many countries, it is still a public health crisis in most of the developing and underdeveloped countries especially among the disadvantaged, underprivileged sections of the societies. Slum population forms one such neglected community which needs attention in this regard. Studies have revealed that majority of households in slums use either non-iodized or inadequately iodized salt because of various factors such as poverty, illiteracy, lack of awareness etc. Also, there are other reasons related to procurement, iodization, transportation, distribution and storage of salt at production, wholesaler, retailer and household level and moreover government's complacency that weakens sustainable salt iodization program. Thus, thinking that we are on the verge of eliminating IDD, a major public health triumph could be a distant dream if actions will not be sought at all levels while implementing the program in poor, deprived sections of the society.

Biography

Ansuman Panigrahi completed his M.D. in Preventive and Social Medicine from S.C.B. Medical College, Utkal University in 2006. He is the Associate Professor of Department of Community Medicine in Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences, KIIT University, Bhubaneswar. He has published nine research papers in indexed, peer reviewed national/international journals and serving as an editorial board member of one international journal and reviewer in two international journals. He has been actively involved in many research projects and successfully completed three certificate courses on research methodology offered by national/international institutions of repute.