

Paediatricians to be roped in for MR vaccination drive

Umesh.Isalkar@timesgroup.com

Pune: Civic health officials will rope in paediatricians for the second phase of the state-wide vaccination drive against measles-rubella (MR).

Around 4.50 lakh students from 550 schools were immunised in the city during the first phase of the vaccination drive from November 27 last year.

The second phase would focus on immunising kids in the 9 months to five years age bracket. "Paediatricians with maximum footfall will be asked to volunteer by providing their clinic/hospital for vaccination on fixed days," the health officials said, adding that they would provide vaccines and staff for the immunisation drive.

Office-bearers of Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP), Pune branch, have already extended their support to the PMC's move. "We have already vaccinated over 85% school-going children in the six years to 15 years age bracket. We will now focus on vaccinating nine months to five years age bracket children from Wednesday. Already, we have vaccinated around 1 lakh children in this age bracket at schools having nursery and anganwadis," vaccination officer Amit Shah told **TOL**.

He said parents trust their children's paediatricians more than anybody else when it comes to the health of their children. "Hence, we are considering to involve paediatricians while carrying on with the immunization of children under this age bracket," Shah added.

Elaborating, Shah said, "We will only use their (paediatrici-

SECOND PHASE STARTS TODAY



THE OBJECTIVE

■ The aim is to vaccinate about 9.50 lakh students aged between nine months and 15 years against measles-rubella

■ The vaccination drive will cover about 1,254 private, government, aided and non-aided schools and 936 anganwadis in the city

(Source: Pune Municipal Corporation's Health Department)

VACCINATION DATA



ESTIMATED POPULATION ■ VACCINATED

- Annual birth cohort | 50k children/year
- Migratory population in the vaccination age bracket | 30,000-50,000 every year

ans) clinics and hospitals for vaccinating the kids. The staff and vaccines will be provided by the Pune Municipal Corporation and children will be vaccinated as per the convenient days and time of the respective paediatricians."

Paediatrician Sanjay Lalwani, president of the Indian Academy of Paediatrics, Pune branch, an association of paediatricians, said, "We have been supporting the measles-rubella vaccination drive. Hence, we will support it actively when it comes to vaccinating the below five year age bracket."

There are over 750 paediatricians in Pune district, including the municipal limits of Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad. "If all the 750

paediatricians are roped in by the health officials at municipal corporations and district level, coverage of below five years age bracket will be optimal," Lalwani said.

Measles is a highly infectious disease that continues to kill many infants and young children. Rubella infection in a pregnant woman disables a child for life with congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) that may result in deafness, blindness and heart defects.

"This can be prevented by vaccinating the children with MR vaccine. Measles immunization will help directly in reducing deaths of children aged below five years. The rubella vaccine will prevent CRS, thereby reducing disabilities," Lalwani said.