

# The Democrate

## Iodine deficiency in children represents only tip of the iceberg

**“Iodine deficiency in children represents only tip of the iceberg”** said Dr. Azhar Khan, District Health Officer, District Health Department- Islamabad Capital Territory here in an advocacy seminar. “Most children born to iodine-deficient mothers appear normal but have also suffered brain damage and loss in IQ points, affecting their ability to develop to their full potential. These seemingly normal children will later have difficulty learning in school and staying in school” Dr. Azhar Khan further explained.

He committed in a bigger move to ensure his efforts with the TheNetwork for Consumer Protection and other groups working on the promotion of iodized salt to combat iodine deficiency brain damage. He agreed that doctors in the community are more tend to curative side than the preventive side and this is the shortcoming leaving us to face major issues. Dr. Azhar Khan was addressing a seminar held with joint effort of TheNetwork for Consumer Protection and District Health Department-ICT and the support of UNICEF here on Friday in the rural health centre, Barakahu-Islamabad. Advocacy seminar engaged the rural health community including the doctors, medical assistants, lady health supervisors, lady health visitors and lady health workers. The message of iodized salt consumptions should be prioritized and disseminated along with the other health messages of ongoing campaigns. Dr Azhar Khan spoke to the healthcare providers.

“All iodine deficiency disorders can be prevented with just one teaspoon of iodine consumed in tiny amounts on a regular basis over a lifetime at a very little cost”. Executive Coordinator Mr. Nadeem Iqbal during his introductory remark said.

“An estimated 2.25 million Pakistani babies are born each year with intellectual impairment caused by deficiency in pregnancy. About 7% of school going children (6 -12 years) had either palpable or visible goiters on clinical examination” During his presentation Nutrition Officer, UNICEF Dr. Syed Qadir shared with the audience.

“Evidence from the various studies tells us that an inadequate supply of iodine during pregnancy results in damage to the foetal brain that is irreversible” Dr. Qadir said.

Universal salt iodization is the most effective way to ensure that every child gets enough iodine. It was made clear that iodized salt is the cheapest way –Just one teaspoon of iodine consumed over the course of a lifetime can provide a high degree of protection against a range of iodine deficiency disorders. Exhorted Dr Khalid Iqbal, Incharge Rural Health Center Barakahu, Islamabad.

The participants shared their concerns related to iodized salt in the questions and answers session later after the briefing. The participants vowed to contribute to a countrywide awareness drive for iodized salt use.

TN efforts were lauded later for organizing the advocacy seminar in the rural health community by the participants of the advocacy seminar.