

# Business Recorder

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## Pakistan 6th iodine-deficient country: experts

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is rated 6th amongst the countries where iodine deficiency is a serious problem, medical experts said on Thursday.

Health Professionals of Shifa College of Medicine, Shifa College of Nursing, Shifa Free Community Health Center, PMDC, IIMC, IMDC, KRL Hospital, Social Security Hospital, Lady Health Workers Programme, Nutrition Wing, Unicef, WHO, got together at Shifa College of Medicine to discuss iodine deficiency disorders and health professionals role in addressing this serious public health issue.

They emphasised the need for Universal Salt iodization during a meeting organised by The Network for Consumer Protection at Shifa college of Medicine.

Executive Director of the Network, Dr Arif Azad, in his introductory remarks traced the history of network's role in public

health advocacy campaigns, which resulted in legislation to address the issues of smoking and promotion of breast-feeding.

Iodine Deficiency is the world's most prevalent yet easily preventable cause of brain damage, having the most devastating impact on the brain of the developing fetus and young children in the first few years of life. Globally, an estimated 20 million infants are born each year at risk of brain damage from iodine deficiency.

According to Unicef (1998), 70 percent of the total population in Pakistan is at risk of iodine deficiency. A recent research in Pakistan cited that around 50 million people are suffering from iodine deficiency, 6.5 million of whom are facing severe type of deficiency and the gravity is reflected in the striking figure of more than 4 million children born every year unprotected against brain damage. Iodine deficiency can be prevented with just one tea

spoon of iodine - consumed in tiny amounts on a regular basis over a lifetime - at very little cost of Rs. 3.5 per person annually and the most viable option is having universal salt iodization (USI) of edible salt across the country.

Chief guest Principle of Shifa College of Medicine Dr Mohammad Aslam of the event said that Shifa College of medicine will advocate that medical students may conduct researches on IDD's in the surrounding communities of Islamabad in collaboration with TheNetwork so that our potential doctors can play a better role. Shifa will arrange education sessions for patients and General Practitioners.

Sheeba Afghani Communication Specialist, UNICEF, Dr Kazi WHO representative, Dr Zaem Public Health Specialist, Prof. Dr Shamsa Zafar Gynecologist of Islamic International Medical College, and Dr Arif Azad also spoke on the occasion. —PR