

Editorial

This issue of the Annals of the National Academy of Medical Sciences comprises of the proceedings of symposium on Community Acquired Pneumonia - the third in the series of symposia under the joint Tele-Medical Education Programme (North) of the National Academy of Medical Sciences and the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh. The symposium on community acquired pneumonia held on December 23, 2007 at Chandigarh, constituted an important milestone in the Programme with remote site presentations and interactive participation of three different centres (Chandigarh, Shimla and Rohtak).

Pneumonia has continued to pose a challenge to the medical profession since the Pre-Biblical era as was described by Hippocrates in 4th - 5th century B.C. - "when pneumonia is at its height ... it is bad if he had dyspnoea...". Sir William Osler in the 19th century called pneumonia as the "friend of the aged.....so distressing to himself and to his friends ...". Although the clinical features and management of pneumonia have vastly changed over the centuries, the threat to the health

and to the life remains the same. With time, both the morbidity and the mortality have multiplied manifold in view of the enormity of the burden and the ever expanding microbiological spectrum of pneumonias. The added issues of nosocomial and ventilator associated pneumonia have further complicated the problem.

Today, community acquired pneumonia accounts for an annual incidence of over 2 percent in this country. It is a problem confronted by not only the pulmonologists but by practitioners of several medical and surgical specialities such as of General Medicine, Paediatrics, General Surgery, Geriatrics, Neurosurgery, Obstetrics and Gynaecology and others. Every physician and surgeon is expected to manage this problem in his/her day to day clinical practice.

The Proceedings of the Symposium cover a comprehensive review of the subject, ranging from the epidemiology and microbiology to the clinical diagnosis and management. Specific issues with reference to pneumonias in children and in patients with immunosuppressed states* such as the HIV

* These articles will appear in the January-March, 2009 issue

infection, malignancies and organ transplantation are also included. Attempts have been made to review the scanty data which is available from India on different issues.

There is a great need in this country to extend search into the microbiological spectrum and the diagnostic algorithms. Misuse of antibiotics in particular, is an important issue to deliberate. 'On the counter' availability of even the high-

end and 'reserve' antibiotics add to the drug confusion with problems of costs, drug resistance and toxicity. It is of paramount importance to develop national guidelines and local policies for use of antibiotics for treatment of pneumonias.

We hope that this issue of the *Annals* serves as one step forward in the overall care of pneumonias and in the development of the Academy's telemedical education programme.

S.K. Jindal
Professor & Head,
Department of Pulmonary Medicine,
(Professor-incharge, Telemedicine and
NAMS Telemedical Education Programme, North),
Postgraduate Institute of Medical
Education and Research, Chandigarh.