



13:30 - 15:30 BST (UK)
18:00 - 20:00 IST (India)

Friday 30 September 2022

SPECIAL SESSION



International Snakebite Awareness Day: Challenges and Opportunities to Reduce Avoidable Snakebite Deaths in Odisha/ India

In 2018 the Global Snakebite Initiative, Health Action International and the Lillian Lincoln Foundation announced 19th September as the 'International Snakebite Awareness Day'. The purpose of this initiative is to implement the World Health Organisation's (WHO) 'global strategy to reduce death and disability by half by 2030'.

The Avoidable Deaths Network's (ADN) mandate is to reduce avoidable disaster deaths. In 2020, the ADN India Hub in Odisha noted that after flood-related deaths, snakebites were the major cause of death. Snakebite deaths are avoidable deaths and yet men, women and children, especially from lower socioeconomic status continue to die.

To raise awareness of this 'neglected' area of public health, ADN decided to organise its debut Special Session on the 'Challenges and Opportunities to Reduce Avoidable Snakebite Deaths in Odisha/India' on the 19th of September. The Special Session will be

delivered virtually via Zoom and in person in Bhubaneswar in Odisha, India.

The University of Leicester and Avoidable Deaths Network joins the UK in mourning the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. As the funeral will likely take place on 19 September, the Special Session has been rescheduled to Friday 30th September 2022 at 6.00 pm (IST) /1.30 pm (BST).

Snakebite, or snakebite envenoming, is a neglected tropical disease (NTD) which results from the injection of venom, a specialized toxic secretion, into humans by the bite of a venomous snake. It is responsible for between 8,100-138,000 deaths globally each year and affects as many as 2.7 million people each year. It has been estimated that the burden of premature death as a consequence of snakebite is 6.07 disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) (Gutiérrez et al., 2017). Unlike many other diseases, snakebite is entirely avoidable through preventable and treatable measures such as education, access to antivenoms and through

effective governance that minimises delay in seeking medical help (among other things).

India accounts for approximately half of all global snakebite deaths reported through traditional surveillance systems and is responsible for 2.97 million DALYs. Around 70% of deaths occur in eight states with over half of the total Indian population: Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana), Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Facilitated by the Orissa State Volunteers Social Worker's Association (OSVSWA) this Special Session will engage scientists from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Demow Rural Community Health Centre, Aaranyak, All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) Bhubaneswar and practitioners from Snake Rescue Helpline.

Most importantly, the panel will explore the following questions:

- What is the future of this forgotten or neglected tropical disease (NTD)?
- What is the future of the snakes in the context of climate change and increasing numbers of climate-related hazards? Are they going to thrive or extinct as the environment warms up due to climate change in India?
- Can the agenda of reducing these preventable deaths be kept alive as India grapples with the recovery efforts from the impact of COVID-19 and economic lockdown?
- How can the burden of suffering caused by snake bites be reduced?

The expert panel will present context-specific challenges, ground-breaking solutions and awareness campaigns to reduce the burden of snake bite deaths and suffering, and by doing so keep this NTD at the centre of disaster risk, sustainable development and public health policy and discourse.

Finally, the Special Session will be used to present the research findings of the ADN's Future Leaders on the 'causes and circumstances of snake bites' and a 'governance framework' that can lead to reducing snake bite deaths in Odisha, India.

More Information:

For more information, please follow this website: <https://www.avoidable-deaths.net>

References

Gutiérrez, J. M. *et al.* (2017) 'Snakebite envenoming', *Nature Reviews Disease Primers*, 3(1), p. 17063. doi: 10.1038/nrdp.2017.63

International Snakebite Awareness Day. (2022) International Snakebite Awareness Day. Available online at: <https://snakebiteawareness.org/>

Longbottom, J. *et al.* (2018) 'Vulnerability to snakebite envenoming: a global mapping of hotspots', *The Lancet*, 392(10148), pp. 673–684. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31224-8

Williams, D. J. *et al.* (2019) 'Strategy for a globally coordinated response to a priority neglected tropical disease: Snakebite envenoming', *PLoS Negl Trop Dis* 13(2), p e0007059. doi.org/10.1371/journal.pntd.0007059

Note

Description of the Special Session is written by Dr Nibedita S. Ray-Bennett and Ms Lauren MacLeod. © Avoidable Deaths Network (2022)

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