

Mobile phones to tackle malnutrition

Written by Administrator
Monday, 26 November 2012 18:30



The University of Sydney takes the help of mobile phone technology to tackle disease and malnutrition.

New Delhi. The University of Sydney takes the help of mobile phone technology to tackle disease and malnutrition.

Researchers from the University of Sydney in Australia, working with Indian partners, are using mobile phone technology to tackle disease and malnutrition in remote parts of India.

As per World Bank 63 out of every 1000 Indian children die before reaching the age of five, with undernourishment taking a heavy toll.

Anne Marie Thow, a health policy specialist from the University of Sydney, together with Michael Dibley from the Sydney School of Public Health, is piloting a project through the South Asian Infant Feeding Network to tackle child hunger in India.

Building on the efforts of Professor Archana Patel from the Lata Medical Research Foundation and the Indira Gandhi Medical College, the scheme encourages better infant feeding practices by using mobile phones to provide information and counselling to rural families. A midwife checks up on new and expectant mothers by ringing them each week, and as the infant grows women are sent customised text messages each day.

Work is being conducted in Nagpur, Maharashtra.

Another Sydney academic is using mobile phones to help women in India reduce the threat of cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable forms of cancer, but limited medical services in rural regions and the social stigma attached to cancer – which prevents women seeking help – contribute to high mortality rates. Of the 34,000 Indian women who died from cervical cancer in 2010, most were in their late thirties and early forties and most were in rural areas.

With support from the Australian government, Associate Professor Lyndal Trevena from

Mobile phones to tackle malnutrition

Written by Administrator

Monday, 26 November 2012 18:30

Sydney's School of Public Health, is helping to train health workers to conduct a simple but effective low-tech screening and treatment program that is widely promoted by the World Health Organization for use in low-resource settings.

She has collaborated with the Christian Medical College in Vellore, Weill Cornell Medical College in the USA and Cancer Council Australia to implement a screening programme which paints the cervix with vinegar and freezes any abnormalities with liquid nitrogen. This simple technique reduces the lifetime risk of cervical cancer by 25 to 40 per cent

In August, the program brought together thirty experts from across India, including the method's pioneer Dr Sankaranarayanan from WHO, to share experiences and identify solutions.

One of the greatest challenges is to improve women's understanding of cervical cancer. The team hopes to address this through an interactive mobile phone program being piloted in rural towns in Tamil Nadu state.

"This fits in well with the Indian government's plans to provide free mobile phones to the poorest Indian families," says Professor Trevena. "Women will be able to phone in to a VoiceSite and have their questions and concerns answered in their own language. This new technology has the capacity to reach all women, regardless of whether they can read or not."

Professor Trevena, a medical practitioner for 25 years, is among a delegation of more than 20 academic leaders and researchers from the University of Sydney who are visiting India in November.