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Media alert from the Media Scanning & Verification Cell, IDSP-NCDC.

Alert ID	Publication Date	Reporting Date	Place Name	News Source/Publication Language
5609	01.11.2019	04.11.2019	Banaskantha Gujarat	www.ahmedabadmirror.com/english https://ahmedabadmirror.indiatimes.com/ahmedabad/others/kicker-second-strain-of-diphtheria-hits-banaskantha/articleshow/71849188.cms
Title:	Second strain of diphtheria hits Banaskantha district-Gujarat			
Action By CSU, IDSP -NCDC	Information communicated to DSU- Banaskantha , SSU- Gujarat			

"We are seeing cutaneous diphtheria for the very first time here. Our teams in the field discovered its existence on New Year (Tuesday) and we immediately called a Task Force meeting and began preventive and curative measures a day later," said Dr Manish Fancy, Chief District Health Officer (CDHO) of Banaskantha district of Gujarat where 13 children of 132 patients have already died due to the disease with the disease killing 10% of all affected persons. The lack of vaccination due to inability of outreach into the peripheral talukas in the border district and lack of awareness among the populace has led to more than 132 suspect cases being admitted in District Hospital in Palanpur and the Public Health Centres (PHCs) in Deesa and other major towns. This already uphill battle has further been worsened by the onslaught this possibly more contagious strain of cutaneous diphtheria, wherein it gets under the skin and causes lesions and ulcers. The district and state administration in Gujarat were already having difficulty fighting off the respiratory strain of the disease when this new front opened up before them during Diwali

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**Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), National Centre for Disease Control,
Ministry Of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India**

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weekend, putting scores of more children into the limited medical facilities of the district.

The health department has not yet been able to get a concrete figure on the number of affected children. However, a survey is under way and officials said the full scope of the contagion should come to light by the end of the week. "We are injecting every possible patient of cutaneous diphtheria, their relatives and our own medical staff with crystalline penicillin to offset the disease apart from the Azithromycin treatment being given to those with suspected respiratory diphtheria. However, we will be ramping up these efforts as schools begin opening after Diwali break and we will have education department staff also at hand to provide awareness about vaccination and symptoms of the disease," said Dr Fancy.

Cutaneous diphtheria hits Gujarat for the first time

This is the very first instance of cutaneous Diphtheria having hit Gujarat. According to officials from the health department, although this strain was seen in Kerala and Tamil Nadu from 2015 to 2017, it was not as severe as it is in Gujarat at the moment. Dr Prakash Vaghela, Additional Director of Family Welfare, said, "We have never seen anything like this before. Diphtheria has always been isolated. While we have the resources at hand to battle oral/respiratory diphtheria, the cutaneous strain has struck for the first time. However, we are trying our best to assess the contagion along with our WHO teams there and we should have a probable cause shortly."

Four of 14 Talukas Worst Hit

Statistics coming in from Banaskantha paint a grim picture of the diphtheria outbreak in the district with health officials straining to bring the deadly disease under control. Of the 14 talukas in Banaskantha district, four are the worst affected. Dhanera has been the worst affected, with 65 patients diagnosed with the disease and receiving treatment. Of these, seven patients have already died. Deesa has 25 patients of whom three have died and Lakhni taluka has 16 suspected cases of which, again, three have already died. About 11 patients have been diagnosed in Tharad but there have fortunately been no deaths so far. Of the 132 cases positively identified so far between September 15 and October 28, the highest number, 49 patients, are between 5-10 years of age while 37 patients are between 10-15 years. Officials said 31 cases were of patients between 2-5 years and eight patients are near infants under 2 years of age. Only seven patients are 15 years old and above.

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State team to visit on Friday

A team of monitors from the Gujarat Health and Family Welfare Department (H&FW) is set to visit Banasantha and take stock of the situation in the district on Friday. The team from Gandhinagar, led by Dr Prakash Vaghela, Additional Director of Family Welfare, and Dr Nayan Jani, the State Immunisation Officer, who had earlier visited in the second week of October, will be going to survey the outbreak of the new Diphtheria strain.

Total vaccination

As of October 28, officials informed that more than 52,000 children in the age group of 5 to 15 years had been vaccinated in Banaskantha. WHO sends two more teams to affected talukas The World Health Organization (WHO) also has a team in Banaskantha, monitoring and providing support to the district administration in field activities. They are mostly stationed at Dhanera and other highly-affected talukas. While a primary team had landed there before Diwali, district officials said two more support teams had been sent to help control the spread of diphtheria.

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