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Doctors, experts come together for a book on snakebites

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

With India recording one of highest number of snake bite deaths in the world; doctors, experts and rights activists have come together to publish a comprehensive book on snakebites aimed at providing more insight to medical practitioners and common people in preventing deaths due to snake venom.

The 250-page book titled *Snakes, Snakebites and Treatments* is one of kind comprehensive book dealing with different aspects of snakebites.

“Unlike most of the publication which talk about different kind of snakes and other poisonous creatures, this book is about snakebites along with facts and figures related to deaths caused due to snakebites” Dilip Som, the editor of the book said.

One of the most interesting revelations made through the book, which is a result of four-year extensive study in State’s South 24 Parganas district covering large part of Sunderbans archipelago is that less than one tenth of incidents of snakebite deaths are officially reported, Mr Som said.

Speaking to *The Hindu* over telephone from United Kingdom, David A Warrell, Emeritus Professor of Tropical Medicine, University of Oxford and a global expert on snakebite said that despite long involvement with snakebites, since ancient times the issue remains a “neglected area of public health in India”.

Professor Warrell welcomed the publication and said that community initiatives should be the topmost priority as they reduce risk by creating awareness among the people.

Pointing out that the country records highest deaths due to snake bite in the world, Prof Warrell referred to Registrar General of India’s “Million Death Study” (MDS) which a few years ago has put the number of snakebite deaths about 46,000.

Dayal Bandhu Majumdar, who is member of a committee aimed at coming up with national standard treatment guideline for snakebites in India pointed out that this publication also celebrates the triumph of science over superstitions.

“In the Sunderbans there are lot of superstition associated with snake bites. One of the key forces behind the book, Juktibadi Sanaskriti Sanstha, has been working since 1985 to spread awareness about snakebites in the region. The publication is also result of their efforts also,” Dr Majumdar, an ophthalmologist by training who is working on snakebites for a decade, said.

Samarendra Nath Roy, a doctor of Canning Sub-divisional Hospital has contributed to the book by providing over a dozen of case studies of patients being brought to hospital after being bitten by venomous snakes.

“We found out that majority of patients brought to the hospital are being bitten by Common Krait (*Bungarus caeruleus*),” Dr Roy said. The people are mostly bitten by Common Krait in the night during their sleep on open floor bed, Dr Majumdar said.

Aimed at providing more insight to doctors and common people to prevent death.