WHO and UNICEF have issued a joint statement recommending zinc supplementation in under-five children with acute diarrhoea. This is in view of research findings which have shown that zinc supplementation, when given during an episode of acute diarrhoea, reduces the severity and duration of the episode, and when given for a period of 10-14 days, lowers the incidence of diarrhoea in the following 2-3 months.

This is the scientific evidence. If a country wants to adopt the recommendation about zinc, it needs to translate it into a comprehensive policy.

There is a need to make a number of decisions, for example those on:

which formulation to use

its inclusion in the national essential drug list

its procurement and distribution

cost policy

budget requirement and allocation

revision of clinical guidelines and relevant training materials

dissemination of information on the policy itself—including briefing of the concerned health officials at different levels and health providers, professional associations and academia, and partners

a mechanism to monitor its implementation and evaluate its effects.

Related links

Introducing zinc in a diarrhoeal control programme

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