WHO EMRO | Saving the lives of Syrian mothers and children

Through a donation from the Government of Spain, WHO is providing medicines to support health services in 7 governorates in the Syrian Arab Republic

13 December 2017, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic – Khaled, a 35-year-old carpenter from Aleppo, loves children and dreams of having a family of 4. He looks forward to the day when his children grow up and will hopefully support their parents in their old age. He was overcome with joy when he witnessed the birth of his first son, but this happiness was soon shattered when the obstetrician told him that his wife must be given an Anti-D injection within 72 hours of the delivery if the couple wanted to be able to have more healthy children in the future.

The anti-D immunoglobulin injection is a prescription medication used to prevent a process known as sensitization, which is when a woman with RhD negative blood is exposed to RhD positive blood (during the delivery) and develops an immune response to it.

Khaled said “I didn’t know where to get this kind of injection. I left my wife and my newborn son and went searching for it in the city, but it was in vain until I was informed by an obstetrician that this injection was available in the St Louis Hospital in Aleppo. This revived my hopes. I rushed to the hospital asking for the injection, and they quickly provided it to me for free. Now, the health of my wife and newborn is very good, and we feel reassured about the future of our family.”
"These medicines are not easily available as they are not manufactured locally," says Sister Samia, who supervises the medical services at the St. Louis Hospital. "We receive dozens of women who need this particular type of injection, and their relatives often go to Damascus or even to neighbouring countries to buy it. Khaled and his wife were quite lucky because the hospital had recently received this injection as part of the assistance provided by the World Health Organization."

WHO was able to provide anti-D immunoglobulin injections and other medicines, including anesthetics, to health facilities in 7 governorates in Syria through a generous donation from the Government of Spain. The grant provided sufficient medicines for more than 4500 treatments.

Marian, a midwife working in St Louis Hospital in Aleppo, says “Every day my heart breaks when I am helpless and unable to secure anti-D injections for poor, pregnant women. Often, we collect money from our colleagues in the hospital and give it to the patient so that she can buy the injection. However, in these difficult times, we need support because our own income is hardly sufficient to meet our basic daily needs.”

“Anti-D injections and anesthetic medicines are desperately needed in Syria due to shortages of these types of medicines. This humanitarian support from the Spanish government came just in time to alleviate the suffering and pain of thousands of Syrians in need,” said Ms Elizabeth Hoff, WHO Representative in Syria.

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