

Baal Doctor: A Health Change Agent in School

Shailesh Sutariya

Program Officer, School Health Services, Government of Gujarat, Gandhinagar, Gujarat

Secretary, Indian Association of Preventive and Social Medicine-Gujarat Chapter

Secretary, Indian Public Health Association-Gujarat Chapter

Correspondence : Dr. Shailesh Sutariya, E mail: schoolhealthgujarat@gmail.com

Every child is different and carrying tremendous capabilities within him. To increase and flourish his talent, the overall health of child is the most important determinant. Being health care personnel, it is our moral responsibility to enhance the healthy life styles among children and keep them updated with new fruitful initiatives. Although, a lot of health services and screening amenities are being provided to children, there was a need to add something new in order to increase the interest for health and the awareness about health among children. The concept of "Baal Doctor" is one of these efforts of health care services. Under this concept, every Primary school (Government) is supposed to create one "Baal Doctor" in every class. Departments of Health and Education of Government will jointly work on this concept.

School is another important world for a child, outside his home, where friends play a major role, just like family members. It is the second place after home where every child spends a lot of time and interacts with peers. Every child feels more comfortable and affected with children of same age group and can easily share the problems which he may not do with teachers or his parents. "Baal Doctor" is a "health guide and monitor" from same class and of same age who will facilitate the free interactions and sharing of health related issues with peers. He is trained to screen ailments under guidance of teacher and able to link such children with medical doctors for early treatment of health conditions.

Following actions will be carried out by "Baal Doctor":

- 1) To develop healthy habits in all students.
- 2) To educate all students regarding importance of hand washes and makes them to practice it in "Mid-Day Meal" on daily basis.
- 3) To make all students aware regarding importance of IFA tablets being distributed under Weekly Iron Folate Supplements (WIFS) on every Wednesday.

4) To work on de-addiction in affected child.

5) To provide primary information regarding Seasonal diseases and its prevention.

6) Send the child to school teacher if he/she is suffering from common illness.

Every Baal Doctor will be given an apron to create credibility and image of health care providers and well acceptance of health educational messages in peers. "Baal Doctors" will teach their peers to develop good practices of hygiene on daily basis like cutting nails, taking bath, brushing the teeth, washing hands before having meal, staying away from addiction etc. They will also share the information regarding proper way of cooking, importance of hygiene, use of nutritious food substance in routine meals etc. Additionally, Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials will be provided to them for effective health education. They will not be provided any medicines or drugs to distribute. The main role of a "Baal Doctor" is as a peer health educator. Also they are bridge between child and teacher as well as Medical Doctor. They will also facilitate the prompt interventions in case of any ailments. By this initiative, every child will develop the understanding to occurrence of diseases and skills to prevent them. Apart from this, this concept will also facilitate establishment of the "Doctor" as a role model in a child's mind, instead of any Celebrity which usually children carry in their fantasies.

Thus, if these children are brought up with good health education to inculcate healthy habits and develop morals to build good character, it will go a long way in building healthy citizens and prosperous country. When the child himself gets involved in health related matters, it can certainly result in fruitful outcomes. So this initiative will indeed come out with positives and very prompt results in near future.