



# The Horizon Newsletter

## July 2021

### Letter to a Health Official Sruthi Anne

Mr. Xavier Becerra  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Mr. Becerra:

I am the daughter of two immigrant parents who worked their way from the bottom in India to come here. I wish more of my relatives could be here, but unfortunately, disease got the better of them. You and many other people may think of it as a common infection here, but in reality, it's quite the opposite in many other countries. Now, what is this disease you may ask? Diarrhea, a common illness, but global killer. It's imperative that more research and funding go into finding a possible cure for this and other related infections of the same nature.

Diarrhea is seen as nothing more than an annoyance in more developed countries, but we live in a world on two different axes. Where people living in developed countries have almost no idea of the hardships that people face. "Total diarrheal fatalities among children aged 0-6 years in India were projected to be 158,209, with diarrhea accounting for 9.1% of all fatalities in this age group". This is a massive problem. With the mortality rate in countries like India this high purely due to dysentery and diarrhea, it is crucial that more funding go into developing potential cures for diarrhea. In most cases, having dysentery or diarrhea is a life or death

situation. People in poorer countries with not as many resources often have to go through extreme measures to be treated. This means taking out high profile loans, selling their homes, and potentially going into poverty. The imminent threat of going through the cycles of poverty scares me more than anything, and it's even more painful to see the sorrow in people when they are infected. It's why we need effective and affordable treatment in order to combat this looming threat.

Dysentery and Diarrhea are also leading transmitters of other diseases like E. Coli and Salmonella. These two diseases are also killers in the Western world, in countries like the United States, there are averages of 600 deaths per year due to salmonella alone, and roughly 100 per year on average as a result of E. Coli alone. These may not seem like the worst numbers, but if infections like this are claiming this many lives with our advanced healthcare system, imagine the devastating effects it has on poorer countries. In India alone, salmonella is spread in high clusters. Tamil Nadu (56.7%), West Bengal (14.4%), Uttarakhand (7.2%) Bihar (6.2%), Haryana (6.2%), Maharashtra (4.1%) Delhi (NCT) (3.1%), Himachal Pradesh (1%) and Punjab (1%). Among isolates from humans, the highest proportion was found from stool (86.5%) followed by blood (11.5%) and urine (1.9%). This evidence shows how the main spreaders of salmonella are through human fecal matter, which is commonly associated with diarrhea and dysentery.

Many critics of my claim argue that the disease is only a slight annoyance to deal with. But is a disease with a potential of death just an annoyance to those living in poorer countries? Lives are at risk everyday because of how this disease is being pushed aside as if it's no big deal, when it's quite the opposite. Expense, lack of access, and lack of research and development of cures and vaccines are the three biggest roadblocks that I see when I research this disease. Lots of funding has been sent to battle E. Coli, Salmonella, and other rotaviruses, but nothing has been done to prevent the transmission of diarrhea and dysentery. The first step in eliminating more deadly infections is to prevent its transmission, which is diarrhea.

Me, my family in India, and millions of others across all reaches of the world are counting on you to fund more projects to research and eventually cure this disease. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sruthi Anne

Lakshminarayanan, Subitha, and Ramakrishnan Jayalakshmy. "Diarrheal Diseases among Children in India: Current Scenario and Future Perspectives." *Journal of Natural Science, Biology, and Medicine*, Medknow Publications & Media Pvt Ltd, 1 June 2015, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4367049/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4367049/).

*Diarrhoea, Diarrhea, Diarrea - What Is Diarrhoea and How to Prevent It - Rehydration Project*, 15 Nov. 2015, [rehydrate.org/diarrhoea/](http://rehydrate.org/diarrhoea/).

Kumar, Y, et al. "Distribution Trends & Antibiogram Pattern of Salmonella Enterica Newport in India." *The Indian Journal of Medical Research*, Medknow Publications & Media Pvt Ltd, July 2016, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5116903/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5116903/).