

Reference Guidelines for Doctors/ Medical Institutions authorized to issue Compulsory Health Certificates (Yatra – 2021).

1.0 INTRODUCTORY

1.1 The Holy Cave of Shri Amarnathji is situated at an altitude of 13,500 feet above sea level atop South Kashmir Himalayas. The high altitude trek to the Holy Cave involves exposure to extreme cold, low humidity, increased ultraviolet radiations and reduced air pressure. The oxygen level in the air is very low due to which many Yatris face respiratory and other related medical problems. The pilgrims have to trek a distance of 32 km from Chandanwari (Pahalgam Route) and 14 km from Baltal to reach the Holy Shrine.

1.2 Keeping in view the hostile nature of the Yatra area, the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board has been issuing Health Advisories. A copy of the Health Advisories and Do's and Don'ts to be followed by the Yatris, is placed at **Annexure A** and **Annexure B**, respectively.

1.3 In July 2012, the Supreme Court took note of certain Press Reports about the mortality of pilgrims visiting Shri Amarnathji Shrine and constituted a Special High Powered Committee (SHPC) to, inter alia, suggest measures for upgrading the healthcare infrastructure in the Yatra area. The SHPC identified the following reasons for mortality in the Yatra area:

- i) **Non-acclimatization:** Any person who undertakes a trek in the high altitude area is required to necessarily undergo acclimatization for several days. Those undertaking the Yatra are un-acclimatized and rush to complete their Yatra within a day, as a result some of whom fail to recover from High Altitude Sickness and lose their lives.
- ii) **Lack of proper clothing and footwear:** A large number of pilgrims do not carry adequate/ appropriate warm clothing and footwear, are susceptible to falling ill and those who already have

serious Medical Problems (like diabetes, chest/ lung/ cardiac problems) are more susceptible to Medical failures.

iii) **Religious Practices/ Traditions:** Another reason contributing to serious Medical Problem is the insistence of devotees to take an ice cold water bath in the morning and then commence their trek with an empty stomach.

iv) **Profile of Yatris:** Very old men and women, adolescents and people already suffering from ailments are high risk and prone to losing life during the Yatra which involves climbing in a high Altitude difficult area and sudden changes in weather conditions.

1.4 The SHPC in its Report has made more than 20 recommendations dealing with different aspects of Medical Care facilities to be provided to the Yatris during Yatra 2013 and beyond, all of which are being implemented by the Union Government, J&K Government and the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board. One of the recommendations of the SHPC was that all Yatris should continue to furnish Compulsory Health Certificates while seeking registration for the pilgrimage. The SHPC further recommended constitution of an Expert Medical Committee to review the format of Compulsory Health Certificate (CHC) and suggest suitable modifications. The SHPC also recommended that the Compulsory Health Certificate shall not be issued by an RMP (as was prescribed for Yatra-2012) but by the Doctors/ Medical Institutes who are specifically authorised by the State Governments to issue Compulsory Health Certificate.

1.5 The members of the Medical Expert Committee (three nominated by Union Health Secretary and one nominated by State Health Secretary) deliberated on various health related issues which the Yatris have to face during this arduous Yatra and prescribed a revised CHC [containing part (A) and part (B)], a copy of which is enclosed as an **Annexure- I** to these Guidelines.

1.6 Considering the advice of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board in its meeting, held on 31st January, 2013 has decided that **no one below the age of 13 years or above the age of 75 years and no lady with 6 week's pregnancy should be allowed to undertake Yatra.**"

2.0 GUIDELINES FOR DOCTORS / INSTITUTIONS FOR ISSUING COMPULSORY HEALTH CERTIFICATE

2.1 Each applicant shall provide information to the Authorised Doctor/ Institution about his/her health status, past medical history and various ailments from he/she may be suffering or may have suffered as prescribed in part (A) of the Compulsory Health Certificate.

2.2 The Authorised Doctors/ Institutions shall issue the prescribed Compulsory Health Certificate [in part (B) of the format] after **detailed examination of the applicant and necessary investigation(s) / test(s), if needed, and having satisfied himself / herself as to the fitness of the applicant to undertake this arduous Yatra.**

2.3 **The Authorised Doctors/ Institutions shall not issue Compulsory Health Certificate to any applicant who is below the age of 13 years or above the age of 75 years and to pregnant lady with 6 weeks pregnancy.**

2.4 For Yatra 2021 the Authorised Doctors/ Institutions shall issue the Compulsory Health Certificates from 15th March, 2021. The CHCs issued before 15th March, 2021 would not be valid for the Registration purposes.

2.5 **All the doctors/ Health Institutions authorised by the State Governments/ UTs shall appropriately evaluate the health conditions of the applicant, [keeping in view the high altitude of the Yatra route (as high as 14,500 ft), temperature variation (the temperature goes as low as 5 degree Celsius in case of bad weather), level of oxygen in the Yatra area, difficult terrain, steep ascent in the Yatra route at high altitude] and after careful**

examination/ investigation ensure that Compulsory Health certificate is issued to medically fit applicants only.

- 2.6 The nominated Doctors shall ensure that the applicant who had undergone **bypass surgery** or even had **implanted stents** are **not** issued CHC facilitating them to get YPF in view of **the high altitude of the Yatra route level of oxygen in the Yatra area, difficult terrain, steep ascent in the Yatra route at high altitude.** The nominated Doctors shall further ensure foolproof and effective screening of intending pilgrims especially to the cardiac / diabetic patients before issuing of CHCs to them.
- 2.7 The nominated Doctors shall indicate their 'MCI Registration Number' and "name" at the appropriate places indicated in Part (B) of the enclosed CHC at **Annexure-I** while issuing the Compulsory Health Certificates. The nominated Doctors shall not leave any place blank in Part (B) of the CHC while signing the CHC.
- 2.8 The authorised doctors shall maintain proper record of the issuance of CHC so that the database so generated could be analysed for bringing about further improvements in the health care facilities in the Yatra area and /or for making further changes in the format of CHC.