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Indian remedy for Caribbean cholera outbreak

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Singapore: The annual cases of cholera in the Caribbean Islands was reduced by 75 percent in the first quarter of 2014, as compared to the same period last year, a new report said.

Health officials attributed the success to the new oral cholera vaccine, Shanchol developed by India based Shantha Biotechnics, which was instrumental in containing the disease to a large extent.

The Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), an international medical humanitarian organisation had set out to test the short term effectiveness of two doses of the Shanchol vaccine, in an outbreak that happened in Haiti in the Caribbean islands.

Till now, health experts were hesitant to embrace new vaccines in outbreak situations, considering the fact that vaccines were very expensive and multiple doses would be needed to prove its efficacy.

MSF described that Shanchol was much cheaper and required a low storage volume that would aid in easy deployment during outbreaks. MSF recommended the WHO to stock pile Shanchol vaccines to handle such outbreaks as it was cheaper, easier to produce and transport.

With Shanchol delivering remarkably good results in the Caribbean islands, its potential use in other regions is being evaluated.