

Schools, society must be sensitive to kids' welfare



PERTINENT POINTS: (From left) Shalini Agarwal, CEO of Safe Baby; Dr Prathap Chandra, consultant neonatologist and paediatrician; Dr Yashoda Devi, paediatrician and Meghana Hegde, rehabilitation psychologist and consultant child psychologist, at the seminar on Friday

Santrupty.Rajankar@timesgroup.com

A difficult child is a child in difficulty. If we have to keep our future citizens healthy, happy and safe, society must ensure a child's physical, emotional, mental and social needs are taken care of. Only then will we be able to integrate them into society. This was the consensus that emerged from the panel discussion at the Times NIE Principals' Meet, held in association with Rainbow Children's Hospital in Bengaluru on Friday.

The panelists, consultant neonatologist and paediatrician Dr Prathap Chandra, CEO of Safe Baby Shalini Agarwal, re-

TIMES NIE PRINCIPALS' MEET

habilitation psychologist and consultant child psychologist Meghana Hegde, moderated by paediatrician Dr Yashoda Devi, discussed threadbare the various aspects that affect the well-being of a child.

Dr Prathap emphasized that since teachers are like a child's second parents, it is important for them to be aware of a child's health conditions, especially about allergies, and chronic problems like asthma and epilepsy. It is also important for schools to have trained nurses to liaison between a tertiary hospital and the school.

Pointing out that one child in every 72 today suffers from autism, Meghana Hegde said observing a kid over a period of time in a proper environment will help a school pick out children with learning dis-

abilities, emotional disabilities, ADHD and other such issues, all of which come under the ambit of autism.

Shalini Agarwal pointed out that most schools are found lacking in ensuring the physical safety of students and are prone to accidents. Most schools tend to take steps after an accident has occurred, she pointed out, urging schools to hold mock drills not just for fire, but accidents too. Training students and senior students in administering first aid is important, she added.

Bullying leading to conduct disorders, management of behaviour, obesity in children, physical violence, sexual and physical abuse were among the other issues tackled during the discussions.

The panelists emphasized the need for all schools to have a child protection committee and involve parents to preempt accidents of any sort in schools.

Earlier, the mood for the event was set with a live performance by SubraMania, comprising singer-songwriter Bindu Subramanian, violinist Ambi Subramanian, Alwyn Fernandes on the guitar and percussionist Karthik Mani.

Dr Prashant Raysad, vice-president, medical and operations, Rainbow Children's Hospital, said "The safety of children at school and home involves protecting them, mentoring their innocence and providing a free environment for growth. It is important for parents and teachers to rightly identify the difficulties of kids. It is great that healthcare specialists and the consortium of principals have been able to come together to discuss this."