



National Activity

12th National Conference of the Indian Association for Adolescent Health (February 24–25, 2023)

Theme: “Adolescent and Youth: Pandemic Preparation for One Health”

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Details of Conference

The Indian Association for Adolescent Health (IAAH) came into existence in 1987, recognising the demographic changes in India and the value of the health of the adolescent population. Since its inception, it has been actively involved in capacity building to focus on the well-being of adolescents and youth. IAAH has more than 700 life members contributing in their own way in different parts of India towards the common objective.

The 12th national conference of IAAH was awarded to the Shaheed Hasan Khan Mewati Government Medical College (SHKM GMC) at village Nalhar of district NUH in Mewat. The conference was organised under the able guidance of Dr Pawan Kumar Goel, Director, SHKM GMC.

The conference was organised on February 24–25, 2023 by the Department of Community Medicine with the active participation of all departments of the medical college.

The theme of the conference was very relevant in the present context with a special focus on One Health. The One Health concept recognises the importance of the requirement of the integrated approach to ensure healthy human beings by keeping animals healthy and the environment pollution-free.

Funding Agencies: State Government through its Additional Chief Secretary, Medical Education and Research Department, US Centres for Disease Control & Prevention (India Office), and Delhi Academy of Medical Sciences.

Chief Guest

The conference was honoured by Dr G Anupama Worthy Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of Haryana, Department of Medical Education and Research, as the chief guest (Figure 1).

The Hon'ble Chief Guest inaugurated the event and highlighted the demographic dividend of India in the present years and the importance of youth for the contribution to the development of the nation. She also reiterated that the health of adolescents and youth may be given the highest priority considering age-specific growth and development and health needs of the adolescents and youth.

Guests of Honour

1. Padma Shri, Shri Kanwal Singh Chauhan, our Guest of Honour, emphasised soil health for a healthy environment and sustainable ecosystem with special reference to the health of adolescents and youth of India (Figure 2).
2. Shri Mahesh Verma, Secretary General, Summit India and National Advisor, NCSC Ministry of Social Justice and Women Empowerment, Government of India, graced the occasion as Guest of Honour (Figure 3). He focussed on the social justice perspective of adolescent health in the present scenario.
3. Wing Commander Shri RK Mandal, Director Principal, BGS Chikballapur, Karnataka delivered a presidential address on behalf of the Founder President, IAAH, Dr Prema Bali (Figure 4).
4. Dr Jugal Kishore, Secretary General, IAAH highlighted the theme of the conference “Adolescent and Youth: Pandemic Preparedness for One Health” (Figure 5).





Figure 1. Inauguration of Programme by our Hon'ble Chief Guest Dr G Anupama



Figure 2. Our Guest of Honour, Shri Kanwal Singh Chauhan, Emphasising the Importance of Soil Health



Figure 3. Our Guest of Honour, Shri Mahesh Verma Emphasising the Social Justice Perspective of Adolescent Health



Figure 4. Presidential Address Delivered by Wing Commander Shri RK Mandal



Figure 5. Dr Jugal Kishore Highlighting the Theme of the Conference

He deliberated that the risk of epidemics and pandemics is always high in the young population. The example of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is enough to demonstrate when they were away from school and college that their peers and playgrounds impacted not only their physical, social, and mental health but also their overall development. Those countries which did not close down their schools performed better in managing the health of their youths. In the absence of a vaccine, the natural infection in the young population provides better protection, particularly against COVID-19. Similar to adults and elderly with comorbidity, adolescents and youth had a higher risk of infection and mortality among those with comorbid conditions such as respiratory diseases like asthma and bronchitis, neurologic, genetic, metabolic conditions, congenital heart disease, or an immunocompromised state. He said that during lockdown and closure of schools, there were increased incidences of sexual child abuse, child labour, and domestic violence, which have a lifelong impact on adolescents.

Schools provide important services and support for children's academic, as well as their social, emotional, and physical health. For instance, social interaction among children in grades K-12 (from kindergarten to 12th grade) is important not only for emotional well-being, but also for children's language, communication, social, and interpersonal skills. Some students may have experienced social isolation and increased anxiety while not physically being in school due to COVID-19. Schools also provide critical services, such as mid-day meal programmes, skill training, and behavioural and mental health services. Continuity of other special services is important for student success and lack of access to these services and supports has the potential to widen existing disparities and cause long-term effects on children's educational outcomes, health, and the economic well-being of families and communities.

Precautions to Safeguard School Children

Schools are part of a society's social capital, providing a safe, supportive learning environment to students, jobs to teachers and supporting staff, and allowing parents and guardians to carry out their professions.

Schools deal with a captive population that can implement preventive and mitigating strategies to reduce the spread of disasters and public health emergencies:

1. Promoting healthy behaviours that reduce spread (e.g., social distancing, washing hands, and wearing cloth face coverings)
2. Maintaining healthy environments (e.g., ensuring proper ventilation, cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces)
3. Maintaining healthy operations (e.g., staggering schedules, keeping students in small groups, cohorts, alternative schedules, hybrid model, blended learning), and
4. Preparedness for any eventuality or development of signs and symptoms

Adolescents and youth leadership is an essential component of the overall programme where they can play a significant role in disseminating correct information, managing crowds, providing first aid, and looking after elderly and young children in a much better way.

He said that this conference was planned keeping this huge useful human resource in mind, and we are grateful to Nuh, the Haryana administration, Dr Rajeev Sharma, Lead Capacity Building in Public Health Emergencies, CDC India office, and Dr AC Dhariwal Former Director NCDC, NVBDCP, to come forward to support us to organise this conference with the theme: Adolescents and Youth: Pandemic Preparedness for One Health. Our young population should be fully aware of why epidemics originate, how they spread and how we can prevent them. Therefore, the conference had many special sessions e.g., one health, yoga and exercises, life skills, healthy environment and sustainable ecosystem, mental health, and school health.

The best part of the conference was that we had a representation of school students speaking on substance abuse and mental health issues before examinations.

He also shared some of the activities of IAAH in brief. He said that IAAH has members from all groups of professionals, including bureaucrats, academicians, school teachers, doctors, social workers, psychologists, etc., and runs a journal named the Indian Journal of Youth and Adolescent Health.

He informed the dignitaries that IAAH honours IAAH fellowships to senior and active members for their significant contributions. This time it was given to Wg Cdr Dr RK Mandal.

Mr Rithvik Reddy K S was awarded the "Dr Sohanlal Gulian Gold Medal" because he is a bright student of BGS World School, Karnataka, who had secured about 95% marks in his last annual examination. He took an interest in all activities of the school, including organising and hosting events in the school. He participated in adolescent health promotion work among his peers and the community. He had made adolescent health-related presentations to the students at the school.

Participants

The conference was attended by about 400 participants including faculty, postgraduate students from medical colleges, paramedical staff of medical colleges, adolescent students from a public school in Bangalore, and volunteers of NCC/NSS from Yasin Meo Degree College, Nuh.

Scientific Programme

Speakers from various national institutes, medical colleges, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, the Indian Council of Medical Research, New Delhi, and AIIMS delivered plenary sessions to cover the theme of the conference “Adolescent and Youth: Pandemic Preparedness for One Health”.

A stand-out speech was made by Shri Sunil Pareek on “Understanding Brahmcharya- the principle of moderation for physical and mental health with its relevance in the 21st century” (Figure 6).

More than one hundred (102 in total) scientific papers including 67 oral and 35 posters were presented in the free paper session.

Plenary Session on Anaemia Challenges for Adolescents

Organised by: National Centre of Excellence and Advanced Research on Anaemia Control (NCEAR-A), CCM, AIIMS, New Delhi

Chaired by: Dr Jugal Kishore, Director Professor & Head of Community Medicine, VMMC & SJH, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Gol (TBC), and Dr Kapil Yadav, Professor, Centre for Community Medicine, AIIMS, New Delhi

Dr Mohan Bairwa, Assistant Professor from CCM, introduced the anaemia problem in adolescents. Dr Agrima Raina, Adolescent Health, MoHFW (TBC) highlighted the current status and challenges for control of anaemia among adolescents in India. The global picture was presented by Ms Sucharita Dutta, Evidence Action (TBC). Ms Areeba Khanam, NCEAR-A, presented the research priorities for adolescent anaemia in India.

A workshop on “Public health emergency and disaster preparedness and response for adolescents and youths” was organised by the Indian branch of the US-based Agency Centre for Disease Control (CDC-INDIA) (Figure 7).

A demonstration/ mock drill on public health emergency and disaster preparedness was done by a team of the National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF) (Figure 8).

Media Partners

The scientific event was successfully covered by various media partners including Door-Darshan, Amar Ujala, Dainik Bhaskar, ANI, etc., and social media.

Credit Points

Haryana Medical Council awarded four credit points to the conference considering the relevance of the theme and its coverage under the scientific programme.

Panel Discussion

A panel discussion was held on “The way forward on adolescent anaemia” by NCEAR-A AIIMS New Delhi Evidence-Based Action (TBC) (Figure 9).

The following recommendations were made at the conference:

Adolescents must be trained for disaster-like situations during the pandemic in the future and to cope with the stress during such conditions.

The First Week of January may be declared as “National Adolescent Health Week” and celebrated in the country to highlight and address the health needs of adolescents.

Adolescence is considered a period of growth spurt with a low sickness rate. Starting adolescent health clinics will help to identify and manage psychosocial health issues at an early stage.

School Health Programmes should ensure the involvement of teachers for early identification and management of minor psychosocial illnesses besides treatment of physical illnesses amongst adolescents.

Peripheral health workers including ANM and ASHA must be trained and sensitised towards age-specific health issues in adolescents, focusing on pandemic preparedness.

Branding of schools as “Health Friendly schools” should be initiated if they have school health programmes, clean water, clean toilets, provision of sanitary napkins, student-community engagement programme, life skill education, first aid, and counselling services.



Figure 6. Speech Delivered by Shri Sunil Pareek



Figure 7. Workshop Organised by the Indian Branch of the US-based Agency Centre for Disease Control (CDC-INDIA)



Figure 8.A Mock Drill Conducted on Public Health Emergency and Disaster Preparedness



Figure 9. Panel Discussion on The Way Forward on Adolescent Anaemia