

# Indian Society for Malaria and Other Communicable Diseases 22 Sham Nath Marg, Delhi - 110054

## A Brief Report on the proceedings of the XIV Annual Conference of Indian Society for Malaria and Other Communicable Diseases held from 19-21 May, 2023 at Thiruvananthapuram

The XIV Annual Conference of Indian Society for Malaria and Other Communicable Diseases was organized from 19-21 May, 2023 at Uday Samudra Leisure Beach Hotel, Kovalam (Thiruvananthapuram) in collaboration with National Centre for Disease Control, State Health Department, Govt. of Kerala and University of Kerala. The theme of the Conference was , “Threat of Zika Virus Diseases and Emergence of other Arboviral diseases.” The three days conference was comprised of Public Health Experts, Medical Entomologists, Scientists, teachers, research scholars from ICMR Institutions, Medical Colleges, Universities, State Programme Officers, Regional Directors, Municipal Corporations, Agriculture Entomologists, Rodent experts, Representatives for WHO Country office South Africa.

About 264 national and international delegates registered for the conference and participated in the three days deliberations. The three days technical sessions were divided into (i) VBDs targeted for Eliminations, (ii). Arboviral diseases including dengue, Chikungunya and Zika (iii) Vector Surveillance and its Control (iv) Climate and VBDs (v). Stakeholders & Partnership (vi) Community Engagements and Behaviour Change Communication. The sessions were further divided into Plenary talks, Oral Presentations and Poster Presentations.



The XIV Annual Conference of Indian Society for Malaria and Other Communicable Diseases was inaugurated on 19.5.2023 at 9.30 am by Prof. (Dr.) Atul Goel, Director General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India. The inaugural session started with the flowers welcome of guests on the dais and lightening of the lamp. Dr. Sujeet Kumar Singh, President of ISMOCD gave welcome address to the delegates and objective of the said conference. Dr. S.N.Sharma, Secretary, ISMOCD presented the report card on the activities of ISMOCD so far after the present executive body took over after elections at Pune Conference. He mentioned about the new initiatives being taken up by the ISMOCD at this Trivandrum Conference. One prestigious Prof.(Dr.) A.P.Dash Award for Vector Control has been started by ISMOCD on the name of Padma Sri Dr. A.P.Dash, who is global personality in the field of Vector Borne Diseases and Vector Control. One more activity as Kerala Chapter of ISMOCD has been initiated during the conference to support the technical activities i.e. Rapid response team, capacity building and out break investigations for the southern states as per the demand by the states. A core group of the ISMOCD public health experts and Medical entomologists shall be formed as a pool resource for the public health activities to be taken up from time to time.



Dr. A.P.Dash, Dr. Anil Kumar, Addl. DGHS Govt of India, Dr. Meenakshi, V. Additional Director, Kerala State, Dr. Roop Kumari Guests of Honour also gave their remarks during the inaugural session. ISMOCD awards and Fellowships were presented to the selected delegates by Dr. Sujeet Kumar Singh, President of ISMOCD. The inaugural session ended with a vote of thanks by Dr. Sukhvir Singh, Treasurer of ISMOCD.



On the day I, after the inauguration of ISMOCD Conference, the first technical session was chaired and Co-Chaired by Dr. A.P.Dash and Dr. P.J. Bhuyan and there were three speakers for the plenary session. This technical session was sponsored by WHO Country Office. Dr. J.P.Narain former Director, CDC gave presentation on a very important topic, "What India's G20 Presidency could mean for Global Health." It was nicely presented by him mentioning about the leadership role by India with respect to not only for the prevention and control of covid-19 pandemic, but also for other issues related with the health at the global level. Dr. Roop Kumari Technical Officer WHO Country Office made an elaborate presentation on malaria elimination in India highlighting the key challenges and possible opportunities.

The second technical session was chaired and Co-chaired by Dr. Sujeet Kumar Singh and Dr. S.K.Jain. Dr. Anup Anvikar, Director NIMR talked about the research priorities in Malaria Elimination Settings. Dr. Shiva Murugasampillay gave a plenary talk on India-Africa Public Health Institutional Partnership in Malaria, Tropical and Communicable Disease Control, Elimination and Eradication. Dr. Showkath Ali former additional director (PH) talked about the policy lessons from covid control in Lakhshadweep for future public health crisis management.

There were two parallel sessions on the oral presentations in Hall 1 and Hall 2. The presentations made in these sessions were also assessed independently by the review committee for the three best presentation awards. There were about 30 oral presentations in the two parallel halls.

The morning technical session was on the topic of Arboviral Diseases including dengue, chikungunya and Zika. Dr. Anil Kumar, Addl. DGHS and Dr. S.K.Jain, Advisor acted as chair and co-chair of this technical session. Ajay Biotech India Ltd sponsored the said technical session. Dr. Kalpana Barua, Former Additional Director NCVBDC presented an overall view of Aedes borne Diseases in the country and also discussed about the National Vector Control Response Strategy for the prevention and control. Dr. Sheela Godbole, Director, NIV Pune gave an over view on the disease elimination – Concepts and way forward in Indian situations. Dr. Pragya Yadav, Deputy Director NIV Pune talked about Zika Viral Disease and the role of ICMR in capacity building, detection and research.

There was another technical session on the emerging and reemerging Vector borne diseases chaired by Dr. J.P.Narain and Co-chaired by Dr. Showkath Ali. This technical session was sponsored by HIL (India) Pvt Ltd. Dr. Rina Tilak talked about the present scenario of Scrub Typhus transmission in India and Challenges w.r.t. surveillance, diagnosis and control. Dr. Rajni Kant, Director Institute of Medical Research, ICMR at Gorakhpur gave an overview of Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) and its effective management in Gorakhpur : Role of Scrub Typhus delineated and lesions learnt. Dr. A.M.K.Mohan Rao presented a talk on the emerging Zoonotic Diseases and Strategies for their Management.

The post lunch session was on Vector Surveillance and its Control and Dr. A.P.Dash, Former Advisor-Malaria, WHO-SEARO Chaired this session and Dr.S.N.Sharma, former Joint Director NCVBDC was Co-chair for the session. This technical session was sponsored by Biotech International and ENVU. Dr. P.K.Srivastava, former joint director NCVBDC made a presentation on vector control options under elimination settings of malaria, lymphatic filariasis, visceral leishmaniasis and validation tools. Dr. R.S.Sharma gave a plenary talk on entomological surveillance and vector control under National Malaria elimination programme in India.

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The third day technical session on climate change and vector borne diseases was chaired by Dr. Rina Tilak and Dr. Renuka Gunte from AFME, Pune. This technical session was sponsored by the Altona Diagnostics and Royal Foggers. Dr. Aakash Shrivastava, Additional Director, NCDC gave an overview on Climate Change and Vector-Borne Diseases: NPCCHH Perspective. Dr. Siraj Khan presented on the Impact of climate Change on VBDs in the North-Eastern States. Sh. Uday Menon, President IPCA talked about National Qualifications on Pest Management.

The technical session on Public Private Partnership and Community Engagements was chaired by Dr. R.S.Sharma and Co-Chaired by Dr. S.N.Sharma. Dr. Subrata Sarkar made a presentation on the Use of Entomopathogenic nematodes as a biological agent to control the larvae of *Phlebotomus argentipes* a causative agent for vector borne disease Leishmaniasis in India. Sh. H.C.Gera talked about Behaviour Change Communication : Evolution and Operational Strategy. Dr. Rajender Thaper gave a plenary talk on HIL India Ltd. : Role in Public Health vector control.



There was a panel discussion before the concluding session on the Future of Medical Entomologists in Public Health Programs at National and State Level and whether elimination of Vector Borne Diseases Possible without Medical Entomologists. Dr. S.N.Sharma acted as moderator for the panel discussion with the contribution of Dr. Meenakhy V. Additional Director, Govt. of Kerala, Dr. Taznin Dikid, Joint Director and Head of CME & VM, NCDC, Dr. R.S.Sharma, Dr. P.K.Srivastava and Dr. Kalpana Baruah. It was opined that unfortunately, the country is facing crisis on the posts of regular medical entomologists at the national and state level and should be filled up on urgent basis. There is frustration among the contractual entomologists due to the insecurity and year to year extensions and being over-aged. The second line of entomologist need to be strong enough to take up challenges in the field of medical entomology and vector control. The vector borne diseases can not be eliminated in the absence of medical entomologists.

The following recommendations were made in the concluding session of ISMOCD Conference.

1. There is a possible threat to Zika and Yellow fever in the country along with the emerging and re-emerging vector borne diseases i.e. KFD, CCHF and Scrub Typhus. A comprehensive preparedness and rapid response action plan



need to be place with time bound disease and vector surveillance mechanism.

2. The main focus for the vector borne diseases targeted for elimination (Malaria, Filaria and Kala-azar) should be micro level planning for supervised program implementation at the grassroot level.
3. The central and state government may be requested to fill up the vacant posts of medical entomologists on urgent basis within a specific time line.
4. Medical colleges may be involved in the surveillance, capacity building and outbreak investigations.
5. Private practitioners need to be sensitized for their active involvement and real time reporting through IMA at the state & district level.
6. ISMOCD shall make a pool of region wise public health experts from life members, who are retired and can contribute in terms of capacity building, technical guidance and outbreak investigations. The respective states can take a call to involve the ISMOCD Rapid Response Teams to support them as per their need and requirements.
7. ISMOCD shall provide the funding support for the field visits to the states.
8. ISMOCD shall select one district each for the elimination of malaria, filaria and kala-azar as shall demonstrate it as model for elimination in consultation with the state authorities.

The conference concluded with a vote of thanks to the organizers, sponsors, delegates, event management team and hotel administration.