

## “From Stethoscope to Microscope”

For Medical Graduates Interested in a Research Career

26 April 2011, University of Calcutta, Kolkata

India Alliance has conducted half a day seminar for medical graduates interested in research, as a part of its continuous effort to reach out to clinical researchers. This session was conducted in collaboration with Centre for Modern Biology, University of Calcutta in the Chandramukhi-Kadambini Hall, Central Library of University of Calcutta, Kolkata.

The session began with a welcome note by Professor Dhruvajyoti Chattopadhyay, Pro-vice Chancellor, University of Calcutta, who took this opportunity to reminisce and pay respects to Kadambini Ganguli, the first woman to be trained in western medicine on the occasion of her 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary and Chandramukhi Basu, one of the first two women graduates in the erstwhile British Empire. Professor Chattopadhyay informed the participants of the unique research program undertaken by University of Calcutta that is specifically aimed at MBBS graduates. Professor Suranjan Das, Vice Chancellor, University of Calcutta commended the India Alliance on its mandate and schemes. He encouraged the medical graduates present to take advantage of the funding opportunities provided by the India Alliance and apply to the different fellowship schemes.

Professor Anuradha Lohia presided over the proceedings of the seminar. She gave a brief introduction to the different fellowship schemes offered by the India Alliance. She emphasized that the selection criterion normally applied for basic scientists did not apply to clinicians and they could apply to any of the fellowship schemes without a PhD. She also emphasized that the India Alliance Fellowships provide flexibility for a clinician to carry out their clinical duties. Professor Lohia commended University of Calcutta for being the first university in the country to offer a research program for MBBS graduates and emphasized that many such programs need to be initiated to improve clinical research in India.

The seminar featured:

### 1. Talks by three eminent and outstanding clinical researchers:

The three clinicians were asked to present their specific areas of research and also share with the young medical graduates, their experiences as clinician scientists. The three clinicians talked about the choices they made to pursue a career in research, their passion for clinical work and how they pursue both with equal enthusiasm. The talks were both informative and inspirational and there was good audience participation in the discussion following the talks.

- Dr B N Chakraborty, Institute of Reproductive Biology, Kolkata

An eminent Gynecologist and a pioneer of IVF treatment in India, Dr Chakraborty has more than 50 years of experience in the field. He presented many interesting case studies from his experience, which were not only challenging clinically but were also of academic interest. Many of these cases were unique and would form basis for new treatments. Dr. Chakraborty also talked about the challenges he had to face as a clinician with active interest in research.

- Dr Subhankar Choudhury, IPGME&R and SSKM Hospital, Kolkata

With strong research experience, Dr Subhankar Choudhary is a professor at and head of the department of Endocrinology at the IPGME&R and SSKM hospital. He has an extensive publication record on Diabetes Mellitus and he took the audience through some of his publications and how the studies were conducted. He also talked about the importance of research to a clinician.

- Dr Mammen Chandy, Tata Memorial Hospital, Kolkata

Renowned Clinical Hematologist, Dr Mammen Chandy worked as the head of the department of Hematology at Christian Medical College, Vellore before joining as the director of Tata Medical Center, Kolkata. In his inspirational presentation, he talked about his experiences in stem cell transplantation at CMC, Vellore, which has a strong academic environment. Taking through his case studies and research, he demonstrated how he benefits from research as a clinician and from clinic as a researcher. He emphasized that it is as important to take the experiences from bedside to the research bench as it is important to take the advancements in bench to bedside. Dr Chandy stressed that he gets equal satisfaction out of both his jobs as a clinician and a researcher and encouraged clinicians to seek out opportunities in research.

## 2. Talks by students pursuing MBBS-PhD program at University of Calcutta

There were four talks by MBBS graduates pursuing PhD under the MBBS-PhD program at University of Calcutta:

- Dr Tridip Chowdhury, Department of Neuromedicine, BIN, Kolkata. Title: Estimation of S 100  $\beta$  protein in ischemic stroke patients.
- Dr Sowmyabrata Munshi, Department of Biochemistry, IPGME&R, Kolkata. Title: Dopamine cytotoxicity in SH-SY5Y cells: Involvement of alpha-synuclein and implications in the pathogenesis of sporadic Parkinson's disease.
- Dr Vivek Mathew, Department of Endocrinology, IPGME&R, Kolkata. Title: Vitamin D status and autoimmune diseases in young diabetics in eastern India.
- Dr Koushik Pandit, Department of Endocrinology, IPGME&R and SSKM Hospital. Title: Prevalence of mutations of genes of monogenic diabetes in the young onset type 2 diabetes in eastern India.

## 3. Panel Discussion

This session provided the participants with a platform to discuss the status of clinical research in India, various avenues available for medical graduates to pursue research in India and the hurdles and problems that need to be addressed to improve the clinician scientist community in the country. The panelists for this session included Dr Mitali Chatterjee, Department of Pharmacology, Institute of PG Medical Education and Research, Professor Mammen Chandy, Professor Anuradha Lohia and Professor Dhruvajyothi Chattopadhyay. In addition, members of the India Alliance Selection Committee for Senior and Intermediate Fellowships also participated in the panel discussion. There was good response to the panel discussion and the audience enthusiastically interacted with the panelists.

This session gave a chance to the students to put forward their major concerns in pursuing their interest in research. The students and panelists agreed that exposure to research at earlier stages of medical career would help cultivate interest in research and also enable the medical graduates to be better trained in research. Members of the panel reiterated the need for research programs for Medical graduates to encourage more clinicians to pursue research. The clinical researchers in the panel also discussed the difficulties in funding they had to face in the initial stages of their research career and how the funding scenario in India has changed in favour of clinicians with initiatives like India Alliance.

Overall, there was good response from the students and many of them enquired about the specific details of the India Alliance Fellowship schemes and had one to one discussions with the India Alliance Grants advisers. In conclusion, both India Alliance and University of Calcutta agreed that there is a need for more such seminars and workshops to be conducted around the country, specifically aimed at Clinicians and Medical graduates.