

**Minutes of the meeting of advisory committee 'ICMR Tribal Health Forum' held at the National Institute of Pathology, New Delhi July 12, 2012**

A meeting of the advisory committee of 'Tribal Health Research Forum' was held at NIOP, New Delhi on July 12, 2012. The meeting was chaired by Lt. Gen. D. Raghunath Chairman SAC, RMRCT, Jabalpur. The following members attended the meeting:

1. Lt. Gen. D. Raghunath  
Chairman SAC, RMRCT, Jabalpur *Chairperson*
2. Dr. S. S. Agarwal  
Lucknow *Expert*
3. Dr. Neeru Singh, Director, RMRCT, Jabalpur
4. Dr. Rashmi Arora, Chief ECD, ICMR, New Delhi
5. Dr. Arvind Pandey, Director, NIMS, New Delhi
6. Dr. Neena Valecha, Director, NIMR, New Delhi
7. Dr. G. S. Toteja, Scientist 'F', Head, Nutrition, ICMR, New Delhi

In addition, Scientists Dr. Roshan Colah, Scientist 'F', (NIIH, Mumbai); Dr. S. Rajasubramaniam, Scientist 'D' (RMRCT, Jabalpur); Dr. Prashant Mathur, Scientist 'D' (NCD, New Delhi), Dr. Mallikarjuna Rao, Scientist-C (NIN) also attended the meeting.

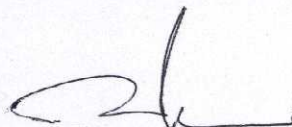
Dr. Neeru Singh welcomed the Lt. Gen. D. Raghunath, Chairman, SAC, RMRCT, Jabalpur, Dr. S. S. Agarwal and other members of 'Tribal Health Research Forum' meeting and requested Lt. Gen. D. Raghunath to chair the meeting and conduct the proceedings. Dr. Neeru Singh, presented the overview about the need and activities of forum since induction.

Lt. Gen. D. Raghunath welcomed all the participants and asked the participants to put forth their views for consideration in the forthcoming meeting of the Tribal Health Forum to be held in Bhubaneswar in August 2012 .

Dr. Prashant Mathur, described the efforts made by Division of NCD to formalize 2 projects that have been sent to Coordinators as a prelude to rolling out. He indicated that health is composite package and NCD is making attempts to develop a morbidity profile to identify NCD risk factors including maternal and Child health care practices. He further mentioned that proposed Tribal Units will provide focus to NCD risk factors. He further enumerated the partnership in various activities of NCD that are being utilized by state authorities leading to capacity building. He suggested that Tribal forum also needs to build partnerships.

***Comments/ Suggestions***

Dr. Neeru Singh in her response to above suggestion indicated that the forum already is partnering with various agencies and departments and pointed that work on Haemoglobinopathies by NIIH, Mumbai and RMRCT, Jabalpur are prime examples of such partnership with medical college Hospitals.



**Dr. G. S. Toteja**, presented the overview of work carried out NNMB with regard to hypertension that revealed prevalence of hypertension in Odisha state. As per DG, ICMR's recommendation Task Force was formed to tackle these health issues based on above findings. He further enumerated conflict in WHO recommendation to reduce salt intake up to 5g/day/person as against the existing programme prescription of iodized salt of 10g/day/person. Such recommendation need to be ratified. He further, informed that a study on hypertension in collaboration with Public Health Foundation of India has been initiated in 5 centers that include 2 centers in Tribal belts of Dhar and Tanda in MP. These centers will carry out intensive and exclusive intervention on NCD risk factors and nutrition.

On the compilation of Tribal compendium, he informed that the proposed compendium will focus on disease profile and immunization. Compendium will depict the achievements of 11<sup>th</sup> five year plan and proposals of 12<sup>th</sup> five year plan. This compendium is expected to serve as gateway to ICMR activities relating to Tribal health.

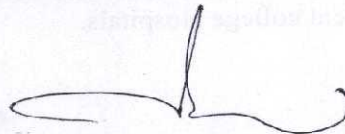
#### ***Comments/ Suggestions***

Lt. Gen. D. Raghunath raised the issue whether hypertension observed among tribals is clinically significant or not? Dr. S.S. Agarwal indicated that these approaches are fragmented and only focused towards Tribals and not to non-tribals. He suggested that a multidisciplinary approach for tackling related and non-related health issues need to be made while working with tribals to avoid frequent tissue retrieval. He emphasized on the need for holistic approaches including education, employment and poverty. Holistic approaches must include socio-economic aspects relating to health. He further reiterated the need for micro level epidemiological studies to identify all risk factor associated diseases. These studies also should identify the infrastructural and manpower availability. Dr. Roshan Colah emphasized the need of creating a self-sustaining programme involving all stake holders. Dr. Arvind Pandey, suggested that NCD risk factor survey conducted in 7 states can be expanded to cover all states. Lt. Gen. D. Raghunath, indicated the need to identify the status of health and State Govt. contribution and such studies need to be carried out at periodically and evaluate its effect.

Dr. Rashmi Arora raised the issue the existence of ambiguity in proposals received by ECD through the forum with respect to benefits to tribal as several proposals have no specific aims catering to tribal health and there is need for prioritization of areas of various divisions of ICMR.

Dr. Neena Valecha in her observations mentioned that the Tribal forum needs to act as an advisory body and ensure operational research conducted do not overlap and prioritize needs of tribals and integrate institutes working on similar subjects. Replying to various issues raised, Dr. Nccru Singh elaborated the actual scenario as 'precarious' needing an instantaneous action.

Dr. Rashmi Arora also raised the procedural delays encountered at various levels in both Central and State Govt. departments. Dr. Agarwal suggested creating a constitution of the forum that can identify such shortcomings and provide a pathway to trouble free activities partnering all stake holders. Lt. Gen. D. Raghunath, reinforced the need for development for standard protocols that are capable of bringing relief to tribals. He also laid emphasis on identifying the health status, infrastructure, assessment and documentation as need of the hour. He noted that the forum has to create a advisory document that can be circulated to government for action.



Summarising his observations, Dr. S. S. Agarwal, mentioned that the forum has to act as "Think tank", knowledge center (advice, expertise, data base), collate information to create future directions. He felt that when formulating research initiatives in tribal areas the efforts should be unfettered by administration divisions in ICMR. Thus when assessing the state of health both NCD, ECD and other ICMR divisions concerned with community health care efforts should be coordinated.

*Throughout the discussions the state of health care delivery in the remoter parts of tribal areas was a cause for concern. The ability of ICMR to influence this aspect was in doubt, particularly, in the politically sensitive areas. In this context, involvement of State governments was emphasized.*

All members unanimously, dwelled on prioritizing following areas of health for launching the forum's activities based on a common protocol that will be developed and followed by scientists working at various institutes on the same disease.

Hypertension/Diabetes, Lipid profiles etc(NCD)

Haemoglobinopathies

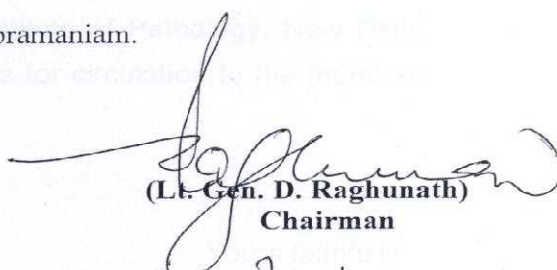
Infectious disease – childhood respiratory infections and diarrhoeal disorders, Malaria, Tuberculosis, monitoring for HIV/AIDS and hepatitis viral infections

Socio-cultural studies and impact of development

and

Health Systems Research in collaboration with State and local bodies

The Meeting ended with a vote of thanks by Dr. Rajasubramaniam.

  
(Lt. Gen. D. Raghunath)  
Chairman

25/7/12