

## **Report on the 2nd International Colloquium Organized by the Indian Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases (iNTD)**

The 2nd International Colloquium organized by the Indian Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases (iNTD) was a significant event in the field of healthcare and neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). Held on October 4th, 2023, at Maithri Mandir, Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences, Kochi, Kerala, the event brought together experts, researchers, and policymakers to discuss the current status and future strategies for addressing NTDs in India. This report highlights the key presentations, panel discussions, and outcomes of the colloquium.

The event commenced with a warm welcome address by Dr. KN Panicker, Chairman of iNTD. Dr. Panicker set the tone for the day's discussions by emphasizing the importance of addressing NTDs in India, acknowledging the challenges, and urging collaborative efforts to eliminate these diseases.

The core of the colloquium featured presentations by experts in the field of NTDs. Each presentation provided valuable insights into different aspects of NTDs, and speakers included Dr Paul T Francis (Additional Professor, Department of Community Medicine, AIMS, Kochi, and Treasurer of iNTD), Dr. Kavita Singh (Director of South Asia at DNDi, New Delhi), Dr. Hope Simpson (Research Fellow at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK), Dr. Merlin Moni (Clinical Associate Professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases, AIMS, Kochi), Dr. Anil Kumar (Head of Department and Professor in the Department of Microbiology, AIMS, Kochi) and Dr. S. Sabesan, Sr. Consultant, Epid. & Control of Vectors & Vector-Borne Diseases, Formerly Director Gr. Scientist, ICMR-VCRC)

Following the expert presentations, a panel discussion on the pragmatic roadmap for the elimination of NTDs in the Indian context was held. Moderated by Dr. Rakesh PS, Senior Technical Advisor at The UNION, the panel discussion included Dr. Lalit Kant, (Vice Chair, NLRIF), Dr. Aswathy S, (Professor and HOD, Department of Community Medicine, and Vice Chair, iNTD), Dr. Claire Fuller (Chair, International Foundation for Dermatology), Dr. S. N. Sharma (Indian Society of Malaria and other Communicable Diseases), Dr. Harikumar S, (Assistant Director PH, DHS & Kerala State Nodal Officer, NRCP), Dr. R. Rajendran (Additional Director, NCDC) and Dr. Jaideep C Menon, (Consultant Cardiologist, AIMS, Kochi & National Advisor, iNTD).

The panel discussion produced several important conclusions and recommendations regarding Political Commitment, Surveillance and Data Quality Assurance, Integration with Primary Health Care, Addressing Structural Challenges, Multi-Sectoral Accountability, Mitigating Threats, One-Health Approach, Community Empowerment and about adequate Investment in Research.

The colloquium concluded with a valedictory function that started with a presentation on iNTD over the years by Dr. Teena Mary Joy, (Associate Professor at AIMS, Kochi, and General Secretary of iNTD), that highlighted the achievements and contributions of iNTD over the years. This was followed by the presidential remarks by Dr. Prathapan Nair P, (Former Principal at AIMS and National Advisor to iNTD). The event was formally inaugurated by Dr. Prem Nair, Group Medical Director of Amrita Hospitals and Provost Amrita. Dr. Beena KV, Additional Medical Superintendent at AIMS, Kochi, Dr. Binu Areeckal, Professor and HOD of the Department of Community Medicine at Government Medical College, Ernakulam, and Dr. K R Thankappan, HOD of the Department of Public Health at AIMS, delivered felicitations.

To provide a human perspective on NTDs, three patients affected by Lymphatic Filariasis were invited to share their experiences, shedding light on the impact of these diseases on individuals and communities. The colloquium saw the endorsement of the Kigali Declaration, a significant commitment to NTD elimination. Dr. K N Panicker, Chairman of iNTD, signed the declaration and handed it over to Dr. R Rajendran, Additional Director of NCDC. Dr. K N Panicker delivered the concluding remarks, emphasizing the importance of continued efforts in minimizing NTDs in this part of the world.