



**Indian council of Medical research
(ICMR)**

Director General's visit

to

**VIRTUAL KNOWLEDGE NETWORK
(VKN) NIMHANS ECHO**

**A brief report
9th July 2016**

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Director General (DG), Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), New Delhi, was at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) on 9th July 2016 to visit the Virtual Knowledge Network (VKN NIMHANS ECHO). This was her first visit to NIMHANS as DG. She was accompanied by Dr. Prasant Mathur, Director, National Centre for Diseases Informatics and Research (NCRP) and Dr. A. Nandakumar, Scientist from ICMR, Bengaluru. The Director / Vice Chancellor Prof. B.N. Gangadhar welcomed the DG, ICMR Dr. Soumya Swaminathan and also other delegates. Prof. S. K. Chaturvedi, Dean Behavioral Sciences, Prof. V. Ravi, Dean, Basic Sciences, Prof. Prabha Chandra, HOD, Psychiatry, Prof. Pratima Murthy and Prof. Vivek Benegal were present. Dr. PT Shivakumar, Dr Sivakumar T, Dr. Deepak J, Dr Suresh BM, Dr Naveen CK, Dr Manjunath and other colleagues also joined the live session and discussion.

Following a round of introductions, there was a brief presentation about the activities being carried out by NIMHANS ECHO by Dr. Prabhat K Chand, who is coordinating the program at NIMHANS.

VKN NIMHANS ECHO SPOKEs from various parts of the country joined online. Dr. Sourav Das and Dr. Uday Chaudhuri from Kolkata, Dr. Devika from Secunderabad, Dr. Vijay from Tezpur, Dr. Sunil from East Champaran Bihar, Dr. Lokesh from Raipur, Dr. Dinesh from Hyderabad, Dr. Mahesh from Gaya, Dr. Piyush from Patna, Mrs. Swarnalatha from Samasthipur, Bihar, Mr. Bitty Thomas, Pondicherry, Dr. Divya SK, Hassan and many more had joined and interacted with DG, ICMR. The participants included medical officers, psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors and post-graduate students.

Virtual Knowledge Network (VKN) NIMHANS runs a weekly online NIMHANS ECHO tele-health sessions for addiction & mental health to bridge the gap in care since 2014. The Project ECHO[®], UNM, US is the intellectual partner of this initiative. The heart of the ECHO model is its hub-and-spoke knowledge-sharing networks, led by expert teams who use multi-point videoconferencing to conduct virtual tele-Health sessions with community health care providers (doctors and others). These health professionals present clinical cases and get suggestions from the HUB team (NIMHANS) about providing the best care to the patient. In this way, doctors, nurses, counsellors and other health professionals learn to provide excellent quality care to patients in their own communities. Currently, NIMHANS ECHO has 1000 spokes across the country and around 30 spokes participate in these weekly tele-health sessions.

This is also linked to an e-learning certificate module. Following the success of the addiction training, ECHO has been initiated in other areas including rehabilitation for Severe Mental Disorders (Road to Recovery) and Perinatal Mental Health. Recently, the non-specialist physicians and counsellors from nine districts of Bihar have been part of the NIMHANS ECHO program held once in fortnightly.

The Director General ICMR interacted with the online health care professionals (spokes) and enquired about the usefulness of this method of mentoring and handholding. She also appreciated the efforts taken by NIMHANS and urged that similar HUBs be developed across the country.

During the interaction, she suggested that some of the academic organisation can be HUB i.e. LGB Regional Institute of Mental Health Assam, AIIMS Raipur. She enquired with the Bihar ECHO spokes about the benefit of these tele-health clinics. She enquired about data collection with respect to clinical outcome. She watched a recorded video of the Bihar ECHO where Dr Mahesh, a medical officer from Bihar

who had been trained by NIMHANS presented a case of Alcohol dependence with Delirium tremens.

She also interacted with faculty of NIMHANS.

The followings are the important points being suggested by faculty

- Dr B N Gangadhar, Director, NIMHANS suggested that this model can be used for other disorders like epilepsy, strokes. He also suggested that the treatment gap in severe mental illness can be decreased significantly by using this method. He also informed that the training videos developed by NIMHANS can be used for training.
- Dr S K Chaturvedi, Dean, Behavioral Sciences highlighted that the academic activities of Department of Psychiatry being webcast to other centres as a part of quality training. He also invited DG for upcoming Digital mental health symposium to be held at NIMHANS on 23rd July.
- Dr Prabha Chandra, HOD, Psychiatry spoke about its usefulness in training community health workers with regard to early detection of mental health issues in pregnancy and post-partum.
- Dr Pratima Murthy, Professor of Psychiatry suggested the utility of this model of health care in large workplace and bigger organisations.
- Dr Vivek Benegal, Professor of Psychiatry and Head, Centre for Addiction Medicine, how this virtual technology is linking and helping in training as well as data compilation for the seven sites of the cVEDA (a project funded by ICMR, India and MRC, UK)

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, DG ICMR suggested how ICMR can work with NIMHANS to take this forward

- Development of a mental health registry and which can be linked to ECHO across the country. ICMR has already developed successful similar registries in the area of cancer and other disorders.

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- Usefulness of this model to link, train and handhold to provide treatment for Drug resistant tuberculosis.
- Useful for training MD/DNB trainees on research methodology and planning research by linking other medical colleges to NIMHANS. This can help in planning for bigger study with better research methodology.
- She also expressed that ICMR is willing to collaborate with NIMHANS to conduct an evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of the NIMHANS ECHO model.

In the end, Prof. B.N. Gangadhar, Director thanked the DG, ICMR for her maiden visit and looked forward to further interaction.