



Indo-Norwegian Co-operation on Antimicrobial resistance

During the visit of Hon'ble President Pranab Mukherjee to Norway in October, 2014 an MoU for co-operation between Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) and the Research Council of Norway (RCN) was signed by India ambassador to Norway Norman Anil Kumar Browne and Arvid Hallen, Director General of RCN. This cooperation seeks to establish a health research relationship for encouraging research in a range of health-related areas of mutual interest, including human vaccines, infectious diseases and antimicrobial resistance. The agreement shall promote direct cooperation within the field being organized through joint calls and funding for research proposals/projects as well as facilitating exchange of scientists and scientific information.

Background:

On behalf of The Research Council of Norway and the Indian Council of Medical Research, University of Tromsø hosted workshop on "Antimicrobial resistance: Understanding challenges and identifying future approaches" on the 26th and 27th of September 2013. The Indian and Norwegian scientists participated in this workshop and deliberated on the challenges of drug resistance and factors fueling the same in the respective countries and the scope for collaboration. The following were the key points of discussion:

- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is an inevitable and natural phenomenon, but the dramatic emergence and spread of AMR in clinically important microbial species is a problem of common concern in India and Norway.
- There is a well-documented global transfer of resistance determinants and clones which further underscores the necessity of international collaboration in this field.
- There are vast differences between Norway and India in AMR epidemiology as well as societal characteristics relevant for containment of AMR, but the core determinants for AMR development are apparently the same.
- India and Norway have complementary competencies in a number of relevant research fields, and there is consequently a solid basis for mutually beneficial exchange of experiences and development of research projects.

Potential areas for future collaboration:

It is therefore proposed to launch an Indo-Norwegian research effort (INNORES) for generating new knowledge relevant for containment of AMR. Research topics for this program might include, but should not be restricted to (list to be expanded):

1. Methods for assessment of the burden of resistance in terms of mortality, morbidity and cost
2. Integrated project surveillance systems for AMR and antibiotic use in humans and/or animals.
3. Design, implementation and evaluation of antibiotic stewardship programs including interventions studies to promote infection control and clinical practice guidelines in hospitals, primary care and veterinary medicine
4. Operational research to optimize antibiotic use in humans and animals in India (including behavioral science).
5. Novel strategies for diagnosis and treatment of infections caused by multidrug-resistant bacteria and fungi.
6. Ecological, evolutionary and molecular studies of AMR in clinical and non-clinical environments.

It was agreed to float a call for proposals by the last quarter of 2015. The suggested projects would include principal partners from India and Norway, but may include additional collaborators from other countries if required. The call should be an open competition based on relevance and scientific merit, and all proposals should be evaluated by independent international experts in the field. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Norwegian Research Council (NFR) will jointly administer the program and fund the Indian and the Norwegian PIs respectively. More information on this may be obtained from Dr Kamini Walia, Scientist E, Division of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases waliakamini@yahoo.co.in and Adviser Merethe Sandberg Moe mm@rcn.no .