

Minutes of the meeting of AHRER

Date: 20.08.2020

Venue: ZOOM Meet

Time: 07.00 PM-08.00 PM

Presiding AHRER Executive members

| Name | Specialty | Location |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Prof. Rajesh Sharan | Biochemistry | Shillong |
| Mr. Samrat Chowdhery | President, INNCO | Mumbai |
| Dr. Vikas Jain | Pediatrics | Indore |
| Dr. Chakrapani Chatla | Public Health | Hyderabad |
| Dr. Sree T. Sucharitha | Public Health | Chennai |
| Dr. Aparajit Kar | Intensivist | New Delhi |

Presiding AHRER New members

| Name | Specialty | Location |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Dr. Kiran Melkote | Orthopedician | New Delhi |
| Dr. Aruna Badam | Chest Physician | Hyderabad |
| Dr. Hari Krishnan | Dental Surgeon | Chennai |

The meeting of Association for Harm reduction Education & Research (AHRER) was convened on **20.08.2020** at **-7.00 PM-08.00 PM** on web portal of ZOOM. The members discussed the following issues:

1. **Welcome of New Members and Introduction of AHRER: Dr. Vikas Jain** welcomed new members to the monthly meeting of the AHRER and gave a brief introduction about the origin of the AHRER.
2. **VIDA News proposal about SPOTLIGHT series on AHRER:** Dr. Sre shared email conversation in follow-up to the July 30th, webinar on VIDA News along with Dr. Nimesh G Desai and Samrat Chowdhery and informed that in the coming days, AHRER members will be approached to share their phenomenal work in the space of Tobacco Harm reduction-THR, undertaken in their clinical practice intended to be showcased as a special docu-series/interview series by VIDA News and will be available on the digital platform for global and national audience for wider dissemination. It is AHRER prime motive to participate in this series to promote the THR work and lead this effort from the front to serve the mission of the organization.
3. **Presentation by Prof. Sharan on the Whitepaper of ICMR: SLT and Indian women** An high-calibre, critically-analyzing, 30-minute presentation highlighted the structure of the paper, as well as the following components:
 - i. definition of a 'whitepaper'*(a new learning)
 - ii. definition of smokeless tobacco (SLT)
 - iii. burden of SLT in India and global burden
 - iv. the data and sources of the data including GATS-1/2,*highlighting the data in 2016/17 of GATS-2 for India could be as older as 5 years prior to that.
 - v. Disproportionate burden of SLT among NORTH-EASTERN STATES of India*8 states among 16 states

- identified in the list of Indian states with >10% prevalence of SLT use among women are NE states.
- vi. SLT use among pregnant and lactating women remains a concern of high priority
 - vii. Determinants of SLT uses
 - i.*Inverse link with education/wealth/lack of awareness
 - ii.*Linear link with increasing age and rural women and
 - iii. *Taxation works.
 - viii. Risk Analysis: Odds Ratio-Higher Odds for oral cancer (5.83 for women vs 2.72 for men) and mortality for women compared to men from analysis of 5 studies.
 - ix. SLT and Reproduction Impact: Nicotine crosses placental barrier and is neuroteratogen and also causes depletion of micro-nutrients
 - x. Intention to quit: 54.4% women users-Not interested to quit
 - xi. Recommendations enlisted included:
 - i. Data gathering efforts
 - ii. Health education materials for pregnant and lactation women about SLT and deleterious health impacts
 - iii. Capacity building
 - iv. Identifying research priorities for barriers to tobacco cessation among women etc

4. Views of Prof. Sharan on Whitepaper of ICMR:

1. 'Whitepaper' caused amusement and contrary to the various definitions referred by presenter in Oxford, Cambridge dictionaries and Google which had keywords like "authoritative paper"/ "philosophy"/ "guide"/ "concisely embodies" this whitepaper by ICMR does nothing of this sort.
2. "As medical professionals' for us "science must not be a closed-down" (thing). This whitepaper, per se, is a bit odd to me...I am planning to write a review to it".
Advocacy for a philosophy....in a span of 7-8 years a decline of 6%, which translates to 1% annually....it is not so good.
3. **Research priorities:** The identified list in the white paper are not comprehensive. Epigenetics, Transgenerational impact, Far-sighted way forward and far-reaching consequences have to be borne in mind.
4. Seeking opportunities in interventions for harm reduction is totally ignored in the whitepaper. Looking at the harm reduction opportunities which worked (SNUS) in other countries (no need to reinvent the wheel) adapting to local conditions is essential.
5. Diverse SLT landscape, lack of product specific tobacco specific nitrosamines research, TPNA and lack of targeted health education on these carcinogens to deter masses from uptake of tobacco, is missing a mention in this whitepaper (No strategy at all perhaps to deter from this gateway effect of betel nut to tobacco?? A totally different strategy is needed)

5. Q and A on Whitepaper of ICMR:

1. **Dr. Vikas:** Did 'Whitepaper' discuss about tobacco harm reduction as option or recommendation?

Prof. Sharan: No, in ICMR whitepaper only mention was about 1. FCTC, 2. Taxation, 3. Demand reduction 4. Awareness 5. Health Education materials

2. **Dr. Vikas:** Swedish SNUS is 95% safe whereas Indian SLT is so carcinogenic as you explained, is it just processing of tobacco so important for removing the toxins?

Prof. Sharan: Betel nuts as we discussed, is proven Class 1 carcinogen, and Indian SLT products (at least 30 products) also add unknown additives/ingredients and we have no analysis performed on many of these products as this is home/cottage industry. No regulation or specific standards are applicable or formulated by government as discussed.

3. **Dr. Vikas:** Is ICMR doing any research on these SLT products?

Prof. Sharan: ICMR only banned e-cigarettes but it is promoting certain research related to tobacco. This should be a research priority. TSNA-tobacco specific nitrosamines-I am writing a review and it will be published soon, but more research needs to be done. This is not reflected in the whitepaper research priorities at all.

4. **Dr. Aruna:** ‘Sir, very nice session. First time, listening to women and tobacco issue and as hunger suppressant tool/aid. How to address this and tobacco cessation? How to motivate them?’

Prof. Sharan: ‘In this cruel society, yes...low BMI among under privileged women, very complex issue....government can conduct more CME’s to raise awareness among health care providers about the gender and tobacco interaction to address this issue in more humane manner’.

5. **Mr. Samrat Chowdhery:** ‘Multiple studies in recent times, the Rijo John et al, Economic costs of Tobacco use in India, WHO study et all point to different data whereas GATS-2 show 6% decline, is this reliable?’

Prof. Sharan: ‘GATS-2 methodology is robust...but interpretation of that data alone cannot be reliable and we have to put that in multiple perspectives along with other studies.

‘Recap and Closure: After a quick recap by Dr. Sre, she profusely thanked our scientific session presenter Prof. Sharan for a thought-provoking discussion tonight and requested all members to have a second reading of the ICMR whitepaper to compound our learnings.

*The minutes were drafted by Dr. Sree T. Sucharitha, AHRER

Next AHRER meeting proposed on: September, 24th, 7-8 PM