

Minutes of the meeting of AHRER

Date: 22.12.2020

Venue: ZOOM Meet

Time: 07.05 PM-08.15 PM

Presiding AHRER Executive members

Name	Specialty	Location
Dr. Sree T. Sucharitha	Public Health	Chennai
Dr. Vikas Jain	Pediatrics	Indore
Dr. Chakrapani Chatla	Public Health	Hyderabad
Dr. Kiran Melkote	Orthopedics	Delhi
Mr. Samrat Chowdhery	INNCO President	Mumbai

Presiding AHRER Association members

Name	Specialty	Location
Dr. Aruna Kumari Badam	Respiratory Medicine	Hyderabad
Dr. Sivagurunathan	Public Health	Chennai
Dr. Sivakami	ENT Surgeon	Chennai
Dr. Hari Krishnan. M	BDS	Chennai
Dr. Gowtham	MDS	Chennai
Dr. Gowtham ST	MDS	Chennai
Dr. Divya Darshini	MBBS	Chennai
Dr. Akhshaya Ponsubha	MBBS	Chennai
Dr. Indhumathy	MBBS	Chennai

Presiding Guest members

Name	Specialty	Location
Dr. Vaishikaa	MBBS	Chennai
Dr. Amritaa	MBBS	Chennai
Dr. Shree	MBBS	Chennai
Dr. Mahesh Machavarapu	Respiratory Medicine	Hyderabad
Mr. Jag	AVI	
Mr. Arin	AVI	
Mr. Bharath	AVI	
Mr. Manan	AVI	
Mr. Maneesh Kaseera	AVI	
Mr. Kanav	AVI	
Mr. Dhaval	AVI	
Mr. Nihar Dholakia	Dholakia Tobacco	

Special Lecture Series

Tobacco Laws in India: Present and the Future Forward

Oral Session by **Mr. Pingal Khan Bhaduri**,

Partner at Ashlar Law, Bengaluru.

The meeting of Association for Harm reduction Education & Research (AHRER) was convened on **22.12.2020** at **-7.05 PM-08.15 PM on web portal of Zoom**. The agenda of the meeting was as follows:

1. Welcome of Members and Introduction of Agenda: **Dr. Vikas** welcomed members to the monthly meeting of the AHRER and gave a brief introduction about **Mr. Pingal Khan Bhaduri**, and invited to deliver the **Special Lecture Series on *Tobacco Laws in India: Present and the Future Forward***

Mr. Pingal's talk was focused on the interpretation of the law report by **National Law School of India University (NLSIU)**. As reported widely in newspapers, the 50-page cited "glaring gaps" and called for amendments in current tobacco laws and proposes recommendations too. The talk highlighted the following salient points from the report:

1. **COTPA:** Definitions of advertisements, sponsorships were explained for the benefit of the audience and how these are more applicable for smoking products such as cigarettes and bidis with little attention to smokeless tobacco products.
 2. **Rationale of the document:** It falls in line with international tobacco laws, governments doesn't want to ban the right to consume but talks about ban on commercial communication, and sufficient regulation not efficient regulation. Harm reduction products will be brought in the UMBRELLA of tobacco products definition, leading to prohibitionist regulation.
 3. **Designated Smoke Free Areas (DSFA):** The recent global pandemic might accelerate the recommendation for reconsidering the elimination of DSFA as non-compliance with regulatory criteria was main identified to be main issue.
 4. **Point of sale display:** This was discussed in the view that, this recommendation is in violation of Article 19, and thus infringes upon the earning of livelihood guaranteed in the Constitution of India.
 5. **Ban on sale of loose cigarettes:** Discussion also centered around personal testimonials that buying single cigarette is harm reduction measure at individual level compared to buying a packet. The ban of sale of loose cigarettes is currently implemented in certain states like Karnataka in ad hoc manner where in main streets were highly monitored compared to arterial streets where sales do happen.
 6. **Display of pictorial warning labels (PWL):** With description about the emission than numbers was recommended.
 7. **Ban of smoking in closed spaces:** This may be "low hanging fruit" during COVID-19 times.
2. **Q and A Session:** The guest talk was followed by Q and A round and following queries were addressed by the speaker

Dr. Vikas

1. What can we do about this law report?

Mr. Pingal: The report is far-fetching we can wait and watch.

2. **Dr. Kiran:**

Can we make an argument for safer nicotine products like SNUS etc just like NRT? Can the protection enjoyed by NRT be applicable to SNUS?

Mr. Pingal: The license to procure liquid nicotine for non-pharmaceutical products is becoming stringent and we need to look into this matter.

Is Vit-D deficiency a real concern in a country like India?

Dr. Bhattacharya: Even in India, especially

3. **Dr. Aruna**

Designating Smoking Zones in IT parks need to be spaced away from schools and colleges so as to minimize the influence on young minds.

4. **Mr. Nihar Dholakia**

Indian Snus is a legal product sold in India, and two product versions are available 1. Tobacco-free (nicotine pouch) facing some regulatory hurdles 2. Tobacco containing (Reduced risk alternative) which is easy to sell.

4. Mr. Samrat Chowdhery

The government of India recently approved removal of pictorial warning labels on smokeless tobacco packages and this commissioned law report will have to be tested for its utility and intentions for any positive reforms.

3. **'Recap and Closure: On behalf of AHRER,** Dr. Sre, thanked Speaker Mr. Pingal for sharing valuable interpretation of the law report and the scope for implementation of the proposed amendments to tobacco laws in India.

AHRER is planning the First Anniversary event on March 21, 2021 at Chennai and this was shared with participants to plan to join and all were invited to continue being engaged with AHRER in 2021 in big way as public intellectuals contributing articles in media and also proposing new research.

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

Next AHRER meeting proposed on: January, 21st, 7-8 PM