

## 15<sup>th</sup> SOMAARTH Foundation Day

10<sup>th</sup> October 2024 | Palwal, Haryana

### Welcome Address by Prof. Narendra Kumar Arora, Executive Director, INCLEN

Dr. Arora opened the program by warmly welcoming all the sarpanches and community members, expressing his deep pride in the supportive community formed by the 51 villages of Palwal within SOMAARTH DDESS. He introduced the speakers, acknowledging the invaluable teamwork of local leaders, health workers, and volunteers. Reflecting on SOMAARTH's 15-year journey in Palwal, Dr. Arora emphasized that none of the achievements would have been possible without the unwavering support of the community and the health department. He highlighted that there is now no corner where quality care doesn't reach, a testament to their collaborative efforts. He also spoke about the potential for a national scale-up based on the valuable lessons learned here, before extending his gratitude to participants and felicitating the chief guests.

### Lighting of the Lamp

The ceremonial lighting of the lamp was conducted by esteemed guests, including: Dr. Jai Bhagwan Jatain, Dr. Pramod Garg, Dr. Sanjiv Kumar, Dr. Yash Gupta, Dr. Jayshree Jethwani, Dr. Gaurishankar, Shri Mahaveer Sharma and Dr. Arora.



### SOMAARTH Program Update by Dr Shikha Dixit, Deputy Director, INCLEN

Dr. Dixit provided a comprehensive update on the ongoing work at SOMAARTH Palwal, highlighting its focus on community health research. The SOMAARTH program addresses key areas such as maternal and child health, disease surveillance (both communicable and non-communicable), elderly dementia, village water sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) assessments and vaccine trials, with particular attention to monitoring potential side effects.



## Activities in the Past Year:

- 1. Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY):** SOMAARTH helped 1,226 families across 51 villages benefit from PMJAY, issuing 5,436 health cards to access affordable healthcare, including 1,204 cards between September 2023 and February 2024.
- 2. SOMAARTH Clinic:** The SOMAARTH Clinic has been an essential healthcare provider in the area, treating 16,596 patients from October 2023 to September 2024. The clinic serves 45 patients daily, with 20 follow-up cases regularly addressed.
- 3. National Tuberculosis Elimination Program:** Since 2022, SOMAARTH has supported 780 TB patients in 43 Panchayats, providing nutrition kits and health advice. From October 2023 to June 2024, 419 new patients joined the program. *SOMAARTH was honored for its **exemplary contribution** to the **National Tuberculosis Elimination Program (NTEP)** as a **Nikshay Mitra** during the inauguration of the **Ayushman Bharat Campaign**.*
- 4. LaQshya Program:** Aims to improve maternal healthcare by enhancing childbirth services, focusing on health worker behavior, cleanliness, and ensuring comprehensive care during childbirth. SOMAARTH is working in collaboration with the health department to improve service delivery under the program through implementation research.
- 5. Modern management of severe pneumonia in children under five:** The study found that 94% of children with pneumonia can be effectively treated at home with antibiotics, with only 6% requiring hospitalization.
- 6. High Blood Pressure Study:** The study revealed that 5% of individuals aged 10-19 and 25% of those aged 40-59 have high blood pressure. The age group at higher risk is 40-59 years, where 25% of individuals were found to have high blood pressure.
- 7. Acute Febrile Illness (AFI) Study:** The study showed that 50% of individuals experienced a fever yearly, with dengue in 1 in 10 and chikungunya in 1 in 30 cases.
- 8. Dementia Study:** The study involved 6,441 elderly participants and revealed that 10% of educated and 15% of uneducated older adults showed signs of mild dementia.
- 9. WaSH-GIS Mapping:** Revealed 15-35 garbage dumps and 40-50 waterlogged areas per village in 51 villages, with 40% habitation facing drainage issues and 70% available drainage were found blocked. Poor drainage system making favourable mosquito breeding grounds in the villages.

## Upcoming Projects:

- **MMS Study:** Focuses on reducing anemia in pregnant women by providing a 15-micronutrient supplement.
- **Still birth Study:** Aims to reduce stillbirths by improving early detection and delivery care quality.
- **Primary School Eye Check-up Study:** Conduct eye examinations for schoolchildren, providing glasses as needed.
- **Vaccine Clinical Trials:** New vaccines for cervical cancer, pneumonia, and meningitis will be tested.

### Address by Dr. Jai Bagwan Jatain, Chief Medical Officer

Dr. Jatain praised SOMAARTH for its long-standing collaboration with the health department in Palwal, working on important initiatives like TB control, LaQshya, and Ayushman cards. He highlighted SOMAARTH's dedicated support, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when their team helped raise awareness and distribute nutrition kits. He expressed his appreciation for their continuous efforts and the regular updates provided by the research team, which have contributed to improving health outcomes in the community.



Dr. Jatain emphasized that he makes time for SOMAARTH's teams because their work directly enhances the effectiveness of his department. He conveyed excitement about upcoming projects and assured that the health department will continue to collaborate with SOMAARTH, taking their inputs into consideration to benefit the community's health. He concluded by expressing his heartfelt thanks and looking forward to SOMAARTH's future contributions.

### Address by Shri Mahaveer Sharma, Chairperson, Community Advisory Board

Shri Mahaveer Sharma opened the discussion by extending a warm welcome and heartfelt thanks to the chief guests, CMO, ANMs, community members, and especially the youth present at the gathering. He expressed deep gratitude to Dr. Arora for selecting their area and consistently improving local health services over the years, particularly acknowledging SOMAARTH's invaluable support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Shri Sharma highlighted the importance of the Community Advisory Board (CAB), where local villagers actively participate to discuss community concerns, mentioning their recent meeting on the October 7, 2024 to provide advice on future projects.



He praised Dr. Arora for his leadership across various national initiatives and expressed pride that someone of his caliber works in their area, helping bridge the gap between the government and the community. Shri Sharma emphasized that the community stands ready to support any of SOMAARTH's activities, including advocating with the government when needed.

He commended the success of the community clinic and urged Dr. Arora to establish 2-3 more clinics in remote areas to further benefit the residents. Addressing a pressing issue, Shri Sharma underscored

the challenges of water drainage faced by the 51 villages and requested attention to ensuring a reliable supply of drinking water, emphasizing its critical importance for future generations.

### Expert session 1 by Dr. Pramod Garg

In the first expert session, Dr. Pramod Garg provided key insights into three major lifestyle diseases—hypertension, diabetes, and cancer—focusing on their risk factors and management strategies. He discussed cancer, particularly lifestyle-related cancers, emphasizing lung cancer, which is strongly linked to smoking, as well as cancers associated with alcohol consumption, obesity, and poor dietary choices. Dr. Garg identified smoking and excessive alcohol intake as major risk factors while highlighting the role of a diet low in fruits and vegetables in increasing cancer risk. He reiterated the importance of changing harmful habits, such as drinking and smoking, especially in the context of increasing lifestyle diseases due to poor lifestyle choices. With the rise of social media and entertainment, these unhealthy habits are becoming more prevalent among young people, making it crucial to deter them from engaging in such behaviors.

Dr. Garg pointed out that the increasing consumption of packaged foods and refined oils, along with reduced physical activity, contributes significantly to poor dietary habits. This dietary shift, influenced by national development and economic growth, has led to an increase in the frequency of meals and, consequently, weight gain. He explained that the rising content of fat in the body clogs blood vessels, contributing to high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol, which can lead to heart attacks.

To prevent these diseases, Dr. Garg emphasized the importance of spreading awareness about healthy lifestyle choices, noting that, despite the widespread knowledge about prevention, individuals have a responsibility to take action. While medications can help manage acute symptoms, the long-term prevention of diseases is primarily up to individuals. He advocated for maintaining an active lifestyle, especially for the elderly, and encouraged the consumption of natural foods while being mindful of portion sizes. He reiterated that “prevention is the best form of cure.”

**Q&A Session:** Dr. Garg addressed the inquiry about whether COVID-19 vaccinations increased heart attack rates, clarifying that initial concerns were based on early observations, but subsequent research has shown that all vaccines are very safe and effective in preventing a variety of diseases. He also discussed common diseases among various age groups, noting that children often face issues like malnutrition and infections, while older adults are more prone to diabetes and hypertension. In response to concerns about kidney problems in children aged 3-4 years, Dr. Garg assured attendees that such cases are not common and may be linked to genetic defects, emphasizing the need for treatment while also advising to avoid dehydration.

Dr. Manoj Kumar Das, Director Projects, INCLLEN concluded the session by expressing gratitude to Dr. Garg for sharing his extensive knowledge and patiently answering questions, and he expressed hope that the health system would take into consideration the valuable suggestions made during the discussion.

### Expert session 3 by Dr. Yash Gupta

In the second expert session, Dr. Yash Gupta offered an insightful discussion on health and wellness, highlighting its rich historical roots in ancient Sanskrit scriptures that date back over a thousand years. He emphasized the significance of the Sushruta Samhita, a foundational text on Ayurveda consisting of 170 chapters, much of which mentions interventions and practices accepted by modern science today. Dr. Gupta described the Bhagavad Gita as not only a spiritual text but also a scientific book, noting how Lord Krishna spoke to Arjuna about the nature of the yugas and the cyclical patterns of life, underscoring India's long-standing status as an advanced civilization.

Dr. Gupta articulated that a key difference between developed and developing nations lies in cleanliness and hygiene, emphasizing that better sanitation practices in developed countries lead to the eradication of waterborne and vector-borne diseases. He pointed out that these nations have built sophisticated systems, such as drainage and waste management, based on scientific principles, and stressed the importance of addressing health and environmental issues within the framework of SOMAARTH-DDESS. He concluded his talk with a shloka, encapsulating the essence of health and wellness.

**Q&A Session:** Questions were raised about measures for preventing cancer. Dr. Gupta highlighted the critical role of vaccines, the concept of "Arogya" (wellness), and practices like pranayama, while advocating for the abandonment of known carcinogens such as cigarettes and alcohol. When asked how to improve cleanliness in India, he noted that infrastructure must be strengthened, reiterating that the Prime Minister is already taking steps to enhance the public health system. Addressing concerns about cancer being untreatable, he reassured the audience that there are effective prevention and treatment options available, with thousands of people having recovered from the disease. He also mentioned the potential role of Bhakti (devotion) in healing.

Dr. Abhishek Agarwal, Deputy Director, INCLIN concluded the session by thanking Dr. Gupta on behalf of the SOMAARTH team for sharing how science is deeply rooted in history and its relevance to modern health practices.

### Open Floor

The floor was opened for anyone wishing to share their thoughts on SOMAARTH. Mr. Arun Jaidar, CAB Member from Sondh village, expressed a deep sense of loss upon hearing of Ratan Tata's passing, requesting a moment of silence for two minutes to honor his memory. He conveyed his heartfelt sorrow, stating that although he had never met or seen Shri Tata, the news of his death left him profoundly affected. Mr. Jaidar emphasized the kind of impactful life that Shri Tata led, encouraging everyone to learn from such luminaries who have shouldered the responsibilities of the nation. He urged attendees to live their lives in service to society, the nation, and their dharma.

Mr. Mukut, CAB Member from Chirawta village, thanked everyone for taking the time to organize and attend the event. He expressed gratitude on behalf of the 51 villages in the area, acknowledging the valuable knowledge shared on disease prevention during the discussions. He assured the gathering that whatever support was requested, the community would be ready to provide it 24/7.

Mr. Uday Singh, a local sarpanch, added his appreciation to SOMAARTH and all the chief guests for their contributions to the event. He reaffirmed that all 51 villages stand united in support of the initiative and are willing to assist with anything that may be needed.

### Remarks by Dr VS Chauhan

Dr. Chauhan is renowned for his contributions to the development of the malaria vaccine, while Mrs. Chauhan is an educationist. This was her second time attending SOMAARTH Day. Dr. Chauhan praised Dr. Arora for his dedication and hard work. Both Dr. and Mrs. Chauhan expressed a desire to contribute to ground-level initiatives. Along with their daughter, they obtained permission from the Delhi government to conduct eye checkups, and so far, around 33,000 screenings have been completed. They have also distributed free lenses to children with low vision. Plans are underway to begin eye checkups in select villages in Palwal, in collaboration with INCLIN.

### Address by Dr. Harish Kumar Vashisth, Deputy Commissioner

Dr. Vashisth extended warm regards to everyone present, including NKA and the chief guests, emphasizing that without community support, the government will struggle to achieve meaningful results in health initiatives. He stressed the importance of collaboration between government bodies and NGOs, highlighting that such partnerships are crucial for enhancing the reach of programs and activities at the grassroots level. Dr. Vashisth shared a poignant example related to



postpartum depression (PPD), discussing a tragic incident where a mother took her own life, underscoring the dangers that arise without adequate awareness and family support.

Addressing the Anemia Mukta Bharat (AMB) initiative, he called for collaboration with ASHA workers and Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), noting that many women are currently ineligible for blood donation. This presents a significant challenge for maternal and child development, particularly in light of the many micronutrient deficiencies that exist. While doctors can provide treatment, he emphasized the need to increase awareness of basic health indicators such as hemoglobin (HB), blood pressure (BP), and diabetes, alongside effective screening and improved sanitation practices.

Dr. Vashisth also discussed the Aspirational District Program, revealing that many women in their first trimester remain unaware of their pregnancies. This highlights a substantial failure in educating women about health and wellness. He reiterated that the government cannot tackle these challenges alone and called for NGOs to work alongside government initiatives to maximize effectiveness and community engagement.

**Q&A Session:** A question raised by a sarpanch regarding the rising prevalence of vector-borne diseases, requesting that the “old medicines” are sprayed in villages. Dr. Vashisth acknowledged the historical use of DDT, noting its detrimental effects on human health and the food chain, which led to its discontinuation after extensive research. Instead, he recommended using mosquito nets as the best preventive measure, and stated that fogging is a more biologically sound alternative.

### Expert session 3 by Dr. Sanjiv Kumar

Dr. Kumar explained that postpartum depression (PPD) can have significant effects on both the mother and the newborn. Babies of mothers with PPD are at higher risk of being born pre-term or with low birth weight. Additionally, a lack of engagement and stimulation from a depressed mother can hinder a baby's cognitive and emotional development. He stressed that postpartum depression is a treatable condition and offered practical steps for prevention, including regular exercise, adequate rest, stress management, and a diet rich in zinc, folate, and vitamin D. He also underscored the importance of family support, highlighting that communication, attention, and moral support are vital for a new mother's recovery.

Dr. Kumar also addressed the often-overlooked issue of postpartum depression in men, explaining that new fathers may experience similar symptoms within the first year of their child's birth, often feeling isolated or lacking support. This can impact their mental health and affect the family as a whole. He concluded by stressing the importance of recognizing postpartum depression in both mothers and fathers. Raising awareness, seeking medical help, and providing proper care and support are essential for fostering healthy family dynamics and ensuring better outcomes for children. Families, he noted, are responsible for ensuring that new mothers receive special care, especially by watching for danger signs and supporting their mental health.

### Award Ceremony

An exciting poster-making competition on the topic of *Lifestyle Diseases and Health* was conducted in ten schools. The winners of the inter-school competition were Rukaiya (Kot), who secured 1st place, followed by Khushi (Aurangabad) in 2nd place, and Nisha (Bahin) in 3rd place. Additionally, the students who won in their respective schools included Sangeeta



(Bamnikhera), Madhubala (Banchari), Neha (Gehlab), Aasmin Khan (Kondal), Rukaiya (Kot), Avni (Sondh), Tapasya (Tikri Brahman), Soniya (Uttawar), Khushi (Aurangabad), and Nisha (Bahin). All of these students were felicitated with medals and books for their achievements.

### Vote of Thanks by Dr. Pinki Sharma, Officer-in-Charge SOMAARTH Palwal

Dr. Pinki expressed her heartfelt gratitude to all attendees on behalf of SOMAARTH Palwal and The INCLIN Trust International. She sincerely appreciated their valuable time and active participation in the event, highlighting how their presence contributed to the success of the gathering.





**Thanking You.....**