

# SOMAARTH-DDESS PALWAL FOUNDATION DAY

## 10 OCTOBER 2023

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### 1. Introduction

In celebration of the 14th anniversary of SOMAARTH Palwal's Foundation, an event was held at the Advance College of Engineering and Technology in Srinagar, District Palwal. A short video commemorating SOMAARTH's remarkable journey in Palwal was presented to event participants. The video showcased the wide array of work and health services provided to the community by SOMAARTH in the district. It highlighted the enduring relationship between SOMAARTH-DDESS and the people of Palwal.

#### 1.1. Opening Remarks

The program commenced with opening remarks by Dr. NK Arora, Executive Director of The INCLIN Trust International. Dr. Arora was pleased to share that the 51 villages of Palwal within the SOMAARTH DDESS have formed a supportive community. The Sarpanch, health workers, AWWs, ANMs, and ASHAs have united to work as a harmonious team. He acknowledged the presence of his esteemed colleagues, whom he considers his 'professional friends.' He remarked that the journey of SOMAARTH in Palwal has spanned 14 remarkable years. The love and support that SOMAARTH has received from the people of Palwal has been truly exceptional. Dr. Arora extended his heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to all the participants of today's event.

### 2. Panel Discussion

The first session was a panel discussion among a select group of experts. The panel discussion covered the following topics:

- ❖ Anemia prevalence and its relevance
  - ❖ Immediate response to pregnant mothers and care needed at the time of institutional delivery
  - ❖ Early symptoms of heart ailments, their recognition, and how to respond in such situations
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The esteemed panelists included:

1. Dr. Himanshu Arora, consultant Cardiologist, Gurunanak Hospitals
2. Dr. Pratima Mittal, Head of Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics, Amrita Hospital
3. Dr. Deepti Sharma, Gynecologist, Amrita Hospital
4. Dr. Anupam Sachdeva, Head of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology Unit, Sir Gangaram Hospital
5. Dr. Harivansh Chopra, Former Professor, Community Medicine, Lala Lajpat Rai Memorial Medical College
6. Dr. Jayshree Jethwani, Communication expert and Senior ICSSR Research Fellow
7. Dr. N. K. Arora, Executive Director, The INCLEN Trust International

The session was moderated by Dr. Abhishek Agarwal, Deputy Director (Research), The INCLEN Trust International.

## **2.1 Anemia**

### **2.1.1 Questions asked by the moderator:**

- a) Anemia is a major public health challenge in India across the spectrum of life. Can you enlighten us as to how a life course approach will benefit us?
- b) What are the symptoms of severe anemia, and how can it be prevented?
- c) How can the community be made aware of the importance of identifying and preventing anemia?

### **2.1.2 Questions from the community:**

- a) In Haryana, diet intake is good compared to other states. However, the prevalence of anemia remains high. Why is that?
- b) How frequently should we go for Hb testing?

### **2.1.3 Panel discussion:**

The panel of experts delved into the life course approach to anemia, illustrating its trajectory from birth through adolescence, its impact on maternal health, and its subsequent effects on fetal development and newborn health. This establishes a recurring cycle of anemia. The experts highlighted the crucial role of prevention, early diagnosis, and timely intervention in breaking this detrimental cycle. They emphasized the need to pinpoint the root causes of anemia and explore appropriate treatment options.

In Haryana, children consume a significant amount of milk and dairy products, which are inhibitors for iron absorption in the body. Further, their intake of food sources with higher iron bioavailability is limited. There

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is insufficient awareness about the consumption of iron-rich foods in both lower and higher socio-economic status families. Consequently, children from affluent families may experience obesity while still being afflicted by anemia. The experts also pointed out menstruation as a significant contributor to anemia in adolescent girls. Additionally, reduced food consumption in senior citizens due to decreased digestion capability can lead to anemia. Hence, compiling a comprehensive list of all potential causes of anemia is essential for determining the correct treatment and breaking the cycle.

The experts stressed that merely incorporating iron-rich foods into the diet is insufficient for anemia treatment; the use of iron and folic acid (IFA), either orally or through injections, is necessary. They acknowledged that the treatment approach may vary depending on the type of anemia, for instance IFA consumption is not suitable for hemolytic anemia.

In response to questions from community health workers, experts discussed the frequency of Hb checks. They advised that a typical individual should undergo an Hb check-up at least once annually, while a pregnant woman should have it done in all three trimesters. Individuals should also remain vigilant for other anemia symptoms such as breathlessness, paleness, yellowing of the eyes, a white tongue, etc. The experts highlighted less-known symptoms like geophagy, pagophagia, loss of appetite, newborns sweating during breastfeeding, and children experiencing a wet pillow at night while sleeping.

The significance of appropriate screening and early intervention for anemia was underscored. The experts outlined the consequences of anemia, including a potential drop in a child's intelligence quotient (by 12-15 points), adversely affecting their education. In adults, anemia could result in reduced stamina, impacting their work. One expert clarified that when children show no symptoms, it is considered well-compensated or adapted, but when symptoms manifest, it's considered decompensated or non-adapted. Frequent illness may contribute to this as well.

Addressing these issues involves community awareness and behavior change, as highlighted by the panel members. Various methods of increasing community awareness were discussed, including utilizing social media, TV and radio advertisements. The experts emphasized that ASHA/ANM/AWWs can serve as effective communication channels within the community. Community leaders, such as sarpanch, priests, maulavis and social influencers, could also play a significant role in facilitating communication with their communities. An example was provided of how vaccine hesitancy was addressed by engaging with maulavis and explaining the importance of vaccines to the Muslim community, ultimately gaining their acceptance. Similarly, there is evidence that myths and preconceived notions prevent some communities from consuming IFA supplements, with an example of women believing that IFA can cause darkness in their babies. In these cases, communication experts act as a bridge between technical medical experts and

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the public. Especially in our country, where the media is not very prominent in public health, leading to occasional misinformation. Therefore, it becomes imperative that the right information be brought to such centers of jan samooch. Quality panel discussions, such as this one organized by INCLEN, were described as platforms where experts and community health workers could convene to sensitize community health workers and bring forward solutions to address local and hence global health issues.

## **2.2. Maternal Health**

### **2.2.1 Questions asked by the moderator:**

- a) When is a pregnancy considered high-risk and how will it impact the mother and child?
- b) Despite the rollout of LaQshya to improve the quality of care, the rate of home deliveries is still around 20%. What could be the reason for this?

### **2.2.2 Questions from the community:**

- a) A woman died after delivering the baby, even though her ANC reports were normal and all ANC check-ups were on time. What could be the reasons for death?

### **2.2.3 Panel discussion:**

The identification of high-risk pregnancies (HRP) is crucial, as experts have emphasized, to reduce maternal and newborn mortality rates. Ensuring safe deliveries and maintaining family planning are paramount for the well-being of both children and mothers. Early pregnancy registration and timely antenatal care (ANC) check-ups play a key role in identifying HRP. Early ANC check-ups and treatment in the first trimester can help prevent or treat adverse birth outcomes. Accurate recording of the conception date allows doctors to estimate appropriate fetal growth. Every pregnant woman requires daily iron supplementation second trimester onwards, as diet alone is insufficient to combat anemia and ensure a healthy delivery. Regular ANC check-ups, including at least one ultrasound in the second trimester, are essential; it is advised to have 3-4 ultrasounds during the entire gestational period.

As part of the planning for the Foundation Day program, community feedback about health concerns was collected to create a roadmap for resolution. Adolescent girls complained about not receiving medical care until falling severely ill. Experts stressed the importance of parents understanding that neglecting their daughters' health can impact not only their well-being but also their education. Organization of adolescent sensitization programs involving frontline health workers and parents was recommended.

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In response to a community question about complicated deliveries despite regular ANC check-ups, experts explained that undiagnosed blood pressure, diabetes, and excessive bleeding (PPH/APH) are common causes. They recommended assessing obstetric history in the first trimester, monitoring blood pressure in the second and third trimesters, conducting anomaly check-ups and ultrasounds to identify HRP causes and reduce mishaps. Experts categorized HRP cases into undiagnosed, sudden onset, and missed reasons, suggesting the implementation of a checklist marked by ANM to identify HRP cases in the future. The importance of postpartum check-ups to minimize adverse events was highlighted.

The panel emphasized the government's recommendation for institutional delivery to minimize complications and adverse outcomes. While Palwal district has nearly 90% institutional deliveries, 10% are still home deliveries. Expert availability and infrastructure preparedness for emergencies are key considerations for selecting where to deliver. The role of ASHA and ANM in postpartum check-ups and counseling were underlined, along with the crucial role of family members in ensuring respectful maternity care and emotional support. For successful institutional deliveries, adherence to the safe delivery checklist is essential. The LaQshya program's guidelines for operation theaters, labor rooms, risk management, infection control, and patient outcome monitoring were emphasized, along with resources for quality improvement and patient safety.

## **2.3 Cardiovascular Emergency**

### **2.3.1 Questions asked by moderator:**

- a) What is the impact of early identification and timely health aid on cardiovascular emergencies?
- b) What are the signs to look for in the case of a cardiovascular emergency?

### **2.3.2 Questions from the community:**

- a) How can one differentiate between a heart attack and pain due gastric reflux or congestion?
- b) What medicine should be given during a heart attack?
- c) Can a heart attack occur despite normal cholesterol levels?
- d) Does angiography help, and what could be the adverse effects of angiography on the patient's health?

### **2.3.3. Panel discussion:**

The panel of experts elucidated the warning signs of a heart attack, emphasizing severe chest pain lasting 5-30 minutes or longer. This pain may extend to the left arm, fingers, throat and head. Common symptoms

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include shortness of breath and excessive sweating. Diabetic neuropathy can lead to numbness, pain in the left arm, and jaw pain, sometimes causing a silent heart attack with no apparent warning signs. The experts provided insights into distinguishing between gastritis and a heart attack, explaining local language expressions such as 'chavak marna,' 'sui chubhna,' 'haath nahi utha pana,' stating a 50% chance of a heart attack in such cases. They emphasized the importance of immediate medical attention with even the slightest suspicion of a heart attack, as the window for life-saving action is small. Experts noted a 6-7% increase in the patient's chances of death after 70 minutes of a heart attack.

Furthermore, the experts underscored the significance of angiography to identify artery blockages, which can cause muscle death in restricted blood supply areas. The minimally painful procedure, akin to a needle prick, carries a risk of only 1-2%. Heart attacks can occur even in individuals with normal cholesterol levels. Thus, regular cholesterol monitoring and precautions are required to reduce risk. In case of a heart attack, immediate administration of four tablets of 75 mg Ecosprin/Disprin was recommended as a potential life-saving measure.

**2.4 Felicitation of Panelists:** The esteemed panelists, including Dr. Himanshu Arora, Dr. Anupam Sachdeva, Dr. Pratima Mittal, Dr. Jay Shree Jethwani, and Dr. Gauri Shankar, were felicitated by Dr. NK Arora, Dr. Manoj Kumar Das, and Dr. Vaishali Deshmuksh for their valuable contributions to the panel.

### **3. Keynote Addresses**

#### **3.1. Remarks by Dr. Naresh Kumar Garg, Chief Medical Officer**

The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) commended Dr. Arora for his efforts in running a program like SOMAARTH in Palwal. The unparalleled support provided by SOMAARTH to the health system was acknowledged, and the CMO expressed optimism about the potential for NGOs and health departments to continue working together, envisioning India as a world leader. Recognizing health as a critical factor for national development, he emphasized that a healthy population contributes to a more productive workforce. The CMO expressed his honor at the presence of the respected panel on this occasion. Furthermore, he acknowledged SOMAARTH's support for the Ayushman card program in the district and the adoption of 300 TB patients for treatment. The CMO concluded by conveying his expectation for ongoing support and cooperation from this NGO in the future.

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### **3.2. Remarks by Mr. Hathin, SDM**

The Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) extended congratulations to SOMAARTH for organizing a meeting that brought together participants from various areas, including sarpanch, ASHA, ANM, AWW, men, women, and school children. The panel discussion facilitated by doctors delved into crucial public health concerns such as anemia, hypertension, and high-risk pregnancies. He praised their insightful conversation which illuminated the challenges faced by individuals and communities, providing a deeper understanding of the urgent need to address these issues.

The SDM noted that the advice given by the panel was well-received, expressing hope that it would be followed. Acknowledging that government instructions are sometimes perceived with skepticism, the SDM emphasized the high effectiveness of NGOs like SOMAARTH, with their elevated level of public acceptance. He commended SOMAARTH for convening all health workers, making a significant impact on the public. He expressed gratitude for SOMAARTH's assistance and advice, and hoped that such initiatives would continue in the future. He concluded with a patriotic "Jai Hind!"

### **3.3. Remarks by Panchayati Officer**

Panchayati officer expressed her delight in accepting the invitation to participate in a health discussion, emphasizing the paramount importance of public health to her. She firmly believes that wealth holds little meaning without good health. In the context of our fast-paced lifestyle, she acknowledged the role of health-related public events or programs in raising awareness among people. Stressing the significance of health awareness within communities, she advocated for a public-private partnership that could enhance the success of health interventions. Recognizing that good health is vital for both physical and mental well-being, she suggested that supporting one another is crucial for the effective implementation of health programs. Panchayati officer expressed deep appreciation for SOMAARTH's contribution to the community.

## **4. Lighting of the Lamp**

The ceremonial lighting of the lamp was conducted by esteemed guests, including: Dr. Anshu Singla (SP Palwal), Naveen Sharma (APO Palwal), Upama Arora (DDPO), Naresh Kumar Garg (CMO Palwal), Vibha Chauhan, Dr. Jay Shree Jethwani, Dr. Gauri Shanker Mukherji, Dr. Anupam Sachdeva, Harivansh Chopra, Dr. Pratima Mittal, Dr. Deepti, Dr. Himanshu Arora, Laksmi Narain (SDM), Dr. Pawan Goel, Dr. Abhishek Yadav, Mukut Lal Sharma (Cab Member), Shri Manjeet (Sarpanch Durgapur), Narender Singh (Ex Sarpanch Gehlab), Hafij Jamil (Imam Gurashar), Vikram (Ex Sarpanch Khatela), Manoj Kumar Rawat

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(Chairman Jila Parishad), and Shri Arun Jaidar (CAB Member and Ex Sarpanch Sondh). The presence of these dignitaries added to the significance of the occasion.

## **5. Poster-making Competition**

An exciting poster presentation competition took place, featuring participation from 11 schools representing 11 different villages: Aurangabad, Bamnikhera, Bahin, Banchari, Kot, Utwar, Kondal, Gehlab, Durgapur, Tikti Brahman, and Seoli. A panel of judges assessed the posters, and the following students were recognized for their outstanding contributions: Nitin (Aurangabad), Sonia (Bamnikhera), Muskan (Bahin), Naina (Banchari), Khushnuma (Kot), Wajib (Utwar), Priya (Kondal), Rakhi (Gehlab), Dua Sharma (Durgapur), Brijesh (Tikti Brahman), and Kajal (Seoli). The audience applauded these students for their exceptional work in the competition.

## **6. Overview of SOMAARTH in Action**

Dr. Arora provided a brief overview of the ongoing and completed work conducted by the SOMAARTH site in Palwal. Emphasizing a collaborative approach with the community over the past 14 years, he noted the presence of 27 sarpanches out of the 51 villages in the site area. Dr. Arora highlighted INCLEN's primary objective, focusing on implementing studies and services at the district level with the potential for national scalability. He cited an example of the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram, where neurodevelopmental disorders were included in a public health program for the first time globally. The tools used nationally to assess these disorders were researched at SOMAARTH Palwal.

Dr. Arora then delved into the ongoing projects at SOMAARTH Palwal. The dementia project revealed that almost 3% of senior citizens (over 60 years old) have complete dementia, and 12% have Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI). Trials have shown potential improvement with GSS medicine. He discussed various implementation research projects, such as LaQshya to enhance the quality of delivery services, improving Emergency Care up to HWC level, achieving stillbirth reduction under 1%, and identifying congenital heart disease within 4 weeks of birth using an electronic stethoscope (AI). Dr. Arora emphasized the goal of making these projects a national model that can be replicated across the country. He concluded by expressing heartfelt gratitude to all functionaries for their support and the community for their acceptance in Palwal.



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## 7. Remarks by Dr. Anshu Singla, Superintendent of Police

Dr. Anshu Singla, Superintendent of Police informed the audience that her expertise is preventive medicine. She remarked that the soul of India resides in its villages. Sarpanchs, as community leaders, play a vital role in strengthening their villages, contributing significantly to national development. She highlighted the manifold impact of Sarpanchi (leadership) on the overall development of both the village and the country.

Addressing health improvement at the community level, she discussed simple lifestyle changes that can have a positive impact. Iron deficiency in women, for example, can lead to poor stamina and congestive heart diseases. She recommended incorporating jaggery in the diet, cooking in iron utensils, maintaining proper hand hygiene, using traditional stoves (chulha) for cooking, and engaging in activities like brisk walking and yogic practices (pranayama). Furthermore, she pointed out the common Vitamin D deficiency across age groups, suggesting an early morning walk in the sun as a simple remedy. Given the rising prevalence of diabetes in India, she advocated for half an hour of daily exercise, which has been proven to increase insulin levels and address mental health issues. Adding mota anaj like jawar, bajra, ragi, choker atta and isabgol to the diet can increase fiber consumption and reduce sugar absorption. She highlighted the benefits of fruits, easily digestible and rich in micronutrients, and specifically recommended white pumpkin juice as a superfood due to its fiber and micronutrient content.

Shifting the focus to a broader perspective, the SP emphasized the importance of changes in thinking processes. She shared an example from her father's teachings, highlighting the significance of a life that serves others, suggesting that such a life is more memorable and impactful. She urged individuals to consider their contributions to the community, suggesting the donation of clothing to NGOs. She concluded with a powerful quote to: "move your energy in the right direction and give back to the community."

**8. Memento distribution:** Dr. NK Arora and Dr. Manoj Kumar Das distributed mementos to all participants, including the SP, CMO, SDM, DDPO, DCPO, APO, and village heads representing the 51 different villages of Palwal district.

## 9. Closing Remarks

Dr. Leena Sushant, Director (Social Sciences), The INCLEN Trust International concluded the event with final remarks. She emphasized that this is not an ending but a beginning of steps toward strengthening the health system of the country. Dr. Leena expressed gratitude to all the experts and community health workers, requesting their continued support in the ongoing work for the community.