

2ND SOUTH ASIAN REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON EVIDENCE INFORMED HEALTH CARE

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Cochrane network is an organization continuously struggling to search for evidence and defining its role in policy making and clinical practice.

Since its inception in 1993 it has grown steadily and has about 1500 members from all over the world including developed and developing countries both.

In order to achieve its goals and creating awareness among health professionals, about the importance of EVIDENCE, this organization keeps organizing symposiums and conferences. This symposium was part of its struggle against ignorance in health care system especially focused on developing countries.

The symposium started at 9.45 am on 9th April 2008 at Scudder Auditorium, located in Greenfield of Christian Medical College, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India. The man behind the show was Prof Prathap Tharayan who along with his team managed the symposium in a befitting manner.

The inaugural session was followed by intensive one day programme of research and clinical presentations, workshops and poster display, fully involving the participants in goal oriented activity all day long.

All the sessions and discussions were based on the important message of "Evidence informed health care."

PLENARY SESSION 1

In the first part of this session, the speakers presented their talk about the role of Cochrane network in evidence informed health care. Lorne Becker in his informative talk reported that the collaboration makes up to date accurate information about the effects of health care readily available by producing, disseminating and continuously updating systematic reviews. The results of Cochrane network are available by subscription on the internet, but are free with one click, to almost all of the world's population.

Then was the presentation by Andy Oxmen, Director Cochrane group from Norway, on evidence informed

health care "What is it and who cares". According to him informed decisions about health policies require information and for policies to be well informed, we need good evidence.

The third presentation of this session was by Paul Garner and Helen Smith from Liverpool UK. They elaborated their views on, "evidence into policy: The effective health care research programme." According to them, involving the people in developing countries in Cochrane reviews and ensuring health problems relevant to their regions was focus of their group activity for the last 15 years.

Jeremy Grimshaw, Director Canadian network, highlighted the bitter realities in his talk on "Moving evidence into policy and practice". He mentioned that globally million dollars are being spent each year, in both public and research on biomedical and health services, but unfortunately health care system and health care research fails to provide the level of care they aspire to. The convincing reason for this failure as he says is the big gap between evidence and practice. According to the figures given by him 30 to 40 % of the patients do not receive the care according to the scientific evidence and 20 to 25 % of care is either not needed or potentially harmful.

PLENARY SESSION 2

This session was again very informative, motivating and eye opener for the participants as very interesting and alarming information were provided in this session.

Peter Gotzsche, Director Nordic Cochrane centre Denmark, in his comprehensive lecture on "Tainted evidence; Drug companies and power of marketing." reported that literature on drugs is seriously distorted through flawed designs, flawed analysis and selective publications of trials. Moreover bribery of doctors apparently in the name of so called research and patient services has become a common practice. Alarming is that the use of violence against independent scientists who have identified harms of drugs is frequent and involves intimidation, litigation and even firing.

The last presentation of this session was on "The effective use of media in disseminating evidence about health care." by Deborah Pantesco Gilbert. He commented that media is the main route through which in-

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formations about new products and interventions get to the health care decision makers. According to his views, we may despair at inaccurate, uncritical and sensationalized media reports but we can no longer ignore the absolute impact of media and increasingly internet in shaping peoples perception of health care.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Another interesting part of this one day intensive symposium was in the form of poster display session. Many authors from different parts of India, even the outside world, very beautifully prepared their posters highlighting the importance of research in many fields of physical and mental health.

The delegates during the lunch break enjoyed this session and made active discussions with the relevant authors. The authors were also awarded prizes for the first three positions along with the winners of essay competition at the end of the programme.

WORKSHOPS

After the lunch break, workshops started .The participants were given choice to select any one according to their interest and requirement in their field of work. The workshops were organized on:

- Systematic reviews of diagnostic test accuracy.

- Clinical trial registrations & results reporting the CONSORT guidelines and beyond.
- Evidence informed health policy.
- Evidence for consumers health care and media
- The chochrane library and EBM resources.

The workshop session was really very interactive and energizing for the participants. In each group there were lively discussions on important topics and areas of interest. All these discussions provided good guidelines to each participant for their future planning and administrative activity.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Dr. Tikki Pang, Director, Research Policy and Co-operation, World Health Organization was the keynote speaker at the occasion. He through his tele speech elaborated various issues regarding Evidence Informed Health Care.

CONCLUSION

It was really a wonderful experience to come across the traditional culture of Chennai and Vellore. Simplicity prevailed in the living, eating and sitting arrangements of the one day symposium, communicating a hidden message of humble living and quality thinking.