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Syngene, Narayana Health, AIF launch unique initiative

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A mobile Science Lab launched to further the knowledge of science amidst students



Syngene International Ltd, a leading global contract research organization, in association with Narayana Health, Agastya International Foundation (AIF) and Biocon Foundation (Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arm of Syngene), announced the launch of **CHAMPS (Child Health Activists Mentoring & Promoting Heath in Society)**, a student mediated initiative focused on preventing and managing early onset of non – communicable diseases (NCDs). The initiative aims at educating and training high school students to be change agents towards improving health seeking behaviour in their communities at large. The inaugural event also saw the launch of a mobile science lab, that will tour various schools and is designed for students to practically experience the magic of science. Equipped with science models and specifically designed experiments, the mobile lab is intended to reach under-resourced schools in rural areas across the country.

In India, 60% of all deaths are caused by NCDs such as type 2 diabetes, cancer, heart and respiratory diseases. Studies conducted in various parts of India have reported high prevalence of hypertension with little to no awareness and control. The Fourth National Family Health Survey evaluated and reported hypertension in 207 million people (men 112 million, women 95 million) in India. The CHAMPS initiative shall address this public health issue of hypertension through 8th and 9th standard students who shall be trained to screen for these symptoms within their community. The initiative which is currently being rolled out as a five-month pilot, is intended to be a three-year long program focused on educating students in prevention and management of early onset of NCDs and promoting a healthier lifestyle among the members of the community.

The combined synergies of Narayana Health as knowledge partner, Syngene and Biocon Foundation as funding partners and Agastya International as the implementation partner will ensure greater awareness in the involved communities. The training modules are tailored to comprehension levels of students who have enrolled and has been designed to create awareness on hypertension and training them in the use of the Blood Pressure apparatus.

Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Managing Director, Syngene International Ltd., in light of the initiative, said, "*As indicated in the 'Hypertension in India' report by National Centre of Biotechnology and Information (NCBI), the number of deaths in India, due to hypertension, has risen and the states with greater urbanization, human and social development have greater incidence of hypertension. Through the CHAMPS initiative, we shall engage high school students as change agents within their communities, by training them to screen for symptoms, i.e. record blood pressure readings and share it with relevant authorities. This will enable monitoring of NCDs in the communities for corrective actions to be implemented*."

"*Most of the patients with high BP are not aware of the problem and the consequences. In the process large number of Indians develop heart failure, kidney failure or brain stroke due to uncontrolled high blood pressure. Our aim of launching the Champs program is twofold, first we would like to detect high BP at early stage. This should prevent future complications by appropriate treatment. By training high school students to record BP we are introducing passionate young kids to the exciting world of medical profession and change the way healthcare is delivered across the world,*"said **Dr. Devi Shetty, Chairman and Executive Director, Narayana Health**

Speaking on the occasion, **Mr. Ramji Raghavan, Founder Chairman of Agastya Foundation, added,** *"We are thrilled to partner with Syngene International, Biocon Foundation and Narayana Health on this unique program combining Science and health education. The fundamental idea of the CHAMPS initiative of developing children as change agents in raising awareness of one of the NCDs, namely hypertension, ties in well with Agastya's philosophy of developing children as young instructor leaders, who are change agents imbibed with a scientific temper. The mobile science van provides a means to support this initiative and gives children access to fun, engaging and interactive ways of learning science and sparks curiosity."*

Extending his best wishes, **Shri S. R Umashankar, IAS, Principal Secretary, Education Department, Government of Karnataka**, said, *"I am certain that this health awareness programme will be imperative in creating the much-required health awareness among the younger generation, giving them a sound body to harbour a sound mind. This will in return strengthen our nation and help in building a healthier future. I am elated that our department is a part of this innovative health awareness programme through school children and I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Dr. Devi Shetty and Mr. Ramji Raghavan for the same."*