

DBT-NIH support 9th annual meeting of RePORT India

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The Meeting was hosted by P. D. Hinduja Hospital & Medical Research Centre



The Department of Biotechnology, India and the National Institute of Health, USA supported the 9th Annual Joint Leadership Meeting of RePORT India from February 10 to 12, 2020.

The Meeting was hosted by P. D. Hinduja Hospital & Medical Research Centre, Mahim, Mumbai.

The RePORT India Initiative is a bilateral programme of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India and National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), National Institutes of Health (NIH), USA, with an aim of advancing tuberculosis research in India. A network of seven Indian Institutions and five US Universities constitute the RePORT India Consortium with the co-ordination hub located at JIPMER, Pondicherry.

The Consortium is chaired by Dr. Sonali Sarkar, Additional Professor, JIPMER on the Indian side and Dr. Amita Gupta, Professor, Johns Hopkins University, USA from the US side with oversight provided by DBT and NIH.

The Joint Leadership meeting is an annual event and provides a forum for discussions on current scientific activities and for outlining future priorities. P. D. Hinduja Hospital & MRC is one of the Indian Institutions of the RePORT India Consortium with focused research on Multi Drug Resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB).

A Letter of Intent (LoI) was signed by the Hospital with NIH in 2016, following which nearly 100 MDR-TB patients were enrolled for the study.

The efforts are important considering that, 1.5 million people die of Tuberculosis (TB) annually across the world and India carries the highest burden of TB related deaths worldwide – 449,700 deaths in 2018.

Scientists from various institutes of the consortium participated actively and shared their knowledge of novel biomarkers, drug targets and vaccines for effectively addressing the threat of tuberculosis (TB).

Dr. Sonali Sarkar, India chair of RePORT India programme said, “We are also learning new science of how the bodies react to tuberculosis which helps in designing better vaccines and therapies against TB.

Dr. Amita Gupta, the US Chair of RePORT India said, “The RePORT consortium is an excellent example of how collaboration between Indian and US scientists and governments can effectively advance discovery of new diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines for tuberculosis. Medical and public health research often happens in silos. By bringing together leading researchers from India and the US, our team science approach is greater than the sum of its parts in fighting the scourge of tuberculosis.”

Researchers speaking at the consortium said that working with TB patients and their families and following them over time has helped them identify the influence of conditions like malnutrition, diabetes, age and air pollution on the risk of getting tuberculosis or having a bad outcome from treatment.

Dr. Camilla Rodrigues, Consultant Microbiologist, P. D. Hinduja Hospital & MRC and Chairperson Infection Control Committee, said, “The contribution of P. D. Hinduja Hospital’s team to the RePORT India consortium includes the “MDR MukT” initiative, as part of which newly diagnosed MDR TB patients are offered routine diagnostics, treatment and counselling. State of the art diagnostics include MICs, whole genome sequencing and assessment of drug levels for second line TB drugs.”

Experts said that it is a really exciting time to be involved with TB research as there are so many new and improved diagnostics, treatments and vaccines to study for TB. RePORT India consortium thus is a great example of how leading scientists and families impacted by TB can come together to collectively fight against TB, the number one killer from an infectious disease.