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# FICCI with Novartis, NASCO and GASCDO, host 2nd National Sickle Conclave

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**The conclave spearheaded discussions on the evolving SCD landscape, emerging therapies, and SCD care for women and children, including pregnancy and neonatal care**




FICCI, in collaboration with Novartis, National Alliance of Sickle Cell Organizations (NASCO) and Global Alliance of Sickle Cell Disease Organizations (GASCDO), recently held the 2nd National Sickle Cell Conclave on the occasion of World Sickle

Cell Day. The conclave, aimed at raising awareness of the need to combat Sickle Cell Disease.

The 2nd National Sickle Cell Conclave was convened with the hope of spearheading a vital discussion on SCD in this evolving landscape and the way forward for the same. The event was graced by speakers including Brig Dr Arvind Lal, Chair – FICCI Swasth Bharat Task Force and Executive Chairman, Dr Lal Pathlabs and Naval Jit Kapoor, Joint Secretary, MOTA, GoI who outlined a roadmap for India, discussing new SCD guidelines report currently underway that will be jointly issued by MOTA and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. He also emphasised the key role of public-private collaborations to scale impact and benefit patients.

Speakers also included Dr Aparup Das, Director, ICMR-NIRTH Jabalpur and Dr Anurag Agrawal, Director, CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, who discussed diagnostic and therapeutic advancements with CRISPR technology. Dr Shailendra Hegde, Senior Vice President, Piramal Swasthya also introduced the *'Unmukt'* project, with Arjun Munda, Union Minister for Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MOTA), GoI and Renuka Singh Saruta, Minister of State, MOTA, GoI, by flagging off the mobile vans for SCD screening and giving a keynote address.

Kevin Zou, Head of Oncology, Asia Pacific Cluster, Novartis and Anil Kumar Jha, Secretary, MOTA, GoI, also addressed the conclave. A poignant video message addressing the challenge of SCD from Mary Ampomah, President and CEO, GASCDO was also showcased. The event also discussed challenges and recent advancements in SCD management through a panel discussion with health experts in the field, moderated by Vinita Srivastava, Tribal Health Cell, MOTA, GoI and Dr Tulika Seth, Professor Haematology, AIIMS. The panel explored the need to augment awareness, introduce effective preventive, management and novel treatment initiatives with a focus on women and children, including the need to scale neonatal and pregnancy screening.

Arjun Munda commented, “We aim to scale the impact of such efforts, through various collaborations and commitment to disadvantaged communities, including tribal and non-tribal populations. SCD has also been highlighted by the Hon’ble Prime Minister who has identified the need to combat the disease through advances in treatment.”

Saumil Mody, GM, Novartis Oncology India and Member of the National SCD Council said, “Through innovative and digitally-enabled solutions, we hope to meet our dual objectives of empowering our patients through improved SCD screening and access to advanced therapies across the country.”

Novartis has embarked on its latest endeavour towards enabling patient access, facilitating a CSR initiative, *'Unmukt,'* to send mobile vans across Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand for SCD screening. Novartis has also signed an MoU with Sickle Cell Institute, Raipur to create a centre of excellence and strengthen the public healthcare system’s approach towards SCD.