

India, US partner on cancer and traditional medicine research

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The first US-India Workshop on Traditional Medicine (March 3-4, 2016) began in New Delhi. The Workshop was jointly inaugurated by the Minister of State for AYUSH (Independent Charge) and Health and Family Welfare, Shri Shripad Yesso Naik and US Ambassador to India, Mr Richard Verma and Assistant Secretary of Global Affairs at HHS, Ambassador Jimmy Kolker.

Representatives from the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Global Affairs (OGA), the National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Cancer Institute (NCI), and US academic institutions will interact with their counterparts from the Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH), and Indian research institutes and universities, in New Delhi during the workshop.

The Workshop is being organized under the auspices of the first US-India Health Dialogue held in September, 2015 in Washington, D.C. This effort underscores the discussions between the U.S. President and the Indian Prime Minister to encourage bilateral dialogue on traditional medicine.

Over the course of the two-day workshop, participants will share current traditional medicine therapies and practices for cancer in US and India. They will review available evidence for AYUSH products and interventions, which could reduce pain/morbidity from cancer treatments and improve the quality of life. Scientists will explore opportunities to collaborate on mutually-identified research in the areas of natural products, palliative care and other support studies. Professional training and scientific exchanges will be an important aspect of this cooperation.

Addressing the participants, the AYUSH Minister, Shri Shripad Naik said that globalization of AYUSH is one of the major policy thrusts of our Government. The constructive collaboration between India and US in this field is important for incorporating more scientific inputs from both sides in Traditional Medicines which can help mainstreaming AYUSH systems in patient health care across the globe. India is also collaborating with World Health Organization (WHO) in the area of

Traditional Medicine which will help in achieving international acceptability and positioning of AYUSH systems, the Minister explained.

"Today's workshop supports the important deliverable from the President Obama-Prime Minister Modi Joint Statement and U.S.-India Health Dialogue, where both India and the US agreed to explore further potential areas of mutual collaboration on Indian Traditional Medicine," said Mr Richard Verma, US Ambassador to India.

"This meeting demonstrates the commitment of HHS to support bilateral cooperation on cancer and traditional medicine research, with science at the cornerstone," said Ambassador Mr Jimmy Kolker, Assistant Secretary of Global Affairs at HHS.

"This is a great opportunity to bring to the table from the US side NCI and NIH expertise in laboratory and clinical evaluation of traditional medicine and from the Indian side an impressive commitment to building the evidence base for traditional Indian medicine," said Dr Edward Trimble, Director of the US NCI's Center for Global Health.

Secretary AYUSH, Shri Ajit Mohan Sharan informed that the International Cooperation Division in the Ministry has been asked to work proactively to forge such collaborations so that large sections of people can benefit from AYUSH systems.

The US delegation also visited several Indian institutes - Benares Hindu University, Jamia Hamdard University, All India Institute of Ayurveda and Medanta - The Medicity, to learn first-hand how Traditional and Modern Medicine co-exist for patient-care.

Nearly 175 participants including experts related to both traditional systems and modern medicine, biologists, and researchers from India and the US will take part in the two day Workshop.

These discussions will be strengthened at the next US-India Health Dialogue this year in India.