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'Understanding cultures impact research outcomes'

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Focusing on developing strong tie-ups in the area of unmet medical needs, the team aims to promote strategic investment to bridge the existing gap between academic research discovery and commercial exploitation and development.

Excerpts:

Dr Andrew Milner, MD & CEO, Neurosciences Victoria: Global diseases of the brain and mind are really important issues

of unmet medical needs. In children, we are focusing on cerebral palsy, which is very prevalent in India than Australia.

When people from India go to Melbourne, there is much more opportunity for collaboration because a strong relationship is developed. It takes time to develop research groups to get comfortable with each other.

It is a wonderful opportunity for Asians to access new drugs and bring it to their marketplace.

Dr Atul Malhotra, Neonatal Pediatrician, Monash Newborn, Senior Lecturer, Monash University: The common reason for death of babies in India is infection and birth asphyxia. Statistics show that 40-50% of death happens due to this condition that we try to address here.

High cost of the Australian Dollar and high standard of living puts pressure on individuals to travel or invest in Australia. The landscape is constantly changing because of various issues. Though investments are difficult, opportunities are available in plenty.

In the neonatal care, we have a big influx of Indian graduates and post graduates who want to enrich their training experience, and more opportunities can be made available to them.

Prof Jayashri Kulkarni, Director, Monash Alfred Psychiatry research center (MAPrc): The global unmet medical needs in terms of mental diseases like depression and psychotic illnesses are very common.

It is estimated that 30% of the Indian population experience depression at some point and women are more susceptible. The main unaddressed issue here in India is women's mental health.

The initial challenges would be the diseases themselves. We are dealing with big diseases. Being in one world, we need to have collaborations by combining scientific knowledge and experience, particularly in the area of mental illnesses.

In Australia, we have different processes for IPs, investors, clinical trials and technologies. Australia has a smaller population to conduct clinical trials and that is a disadvantage.

In India, the issues are different, which could range from funding sources and ethical issues to investments.

The richness in understanding each other's culture has a great impact on the outcomes.

Mr Nathan Farrow, Program Manager, Australia-India Trauma Systems Collaboration, National Trauma Research Institute, The Alfred Hospital & Monash University: In India, we want to develop organized trauma systems. Australia has a lot to learn from India about managing large volumes of trauma. We are excited to be here.

Australia and India has different strengths which complement each other. In India, 5.8 million people die every year from traumatic injuries, and 90% of them happen in developing countries.

Dr Henry De Aizpurua, Deputy Director, The Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health: There are opportunities at three levels. Firstly, we take smart and well-trained Indian researchers and put them in Melbourne, exposing them to new ideas and perspectives that is not available here.

Secondly, when they return, they bring these perspectives and skills to India thereby benefiting their own country.

Thirdly, we want to partner in co-development of new measures that we are working on and bring them forward at a faster rate.

In drug development, at the discovery and early preclinical discovery stage, Melbourne has everything from medical chemistry, toxicology, animal models of human diseases, to magnetic resonance imaging pit. We have the ability to partner with like-minded scientists to establish real partnerships.

Prof Graham Jenkin, Deputy Director, The Ritchie Centre for Translational Research, Monash Institute of Medical Research: It is essentially the interchange of scientists between India and Melbourne. People from both the sides visit and learn from each other and gain wonderful experience.

Stem cell research and its clinical translation in India is considerably expanding internationally. That's an area of mutual research interest for us.