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UK and India to work together on Evidence-Informed Healthcare Policy and Practice

17 June 2013 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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Dr V M Katoch, Secretary, Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt of India signed an MOU with Sir Andrew Dillon, Chief Executive of the National Institute for Health and Care excellence, UK (NICE) in London yesterday to provide the framework for strategic and technical cooperation between the two countries, on evidence informed healthcare policy and practice.

The MOU followed the signature of an overarching health MoU between UK and India at the World Health Assembly, Geneva, last month by Health Ministers of India and UK. Yesterday's agreement between DHR and NICE aims to (1) bring modern health technology to people by encouraging innovations related to diagnostics, treatment methods and prevention; (2) translate the innovations into products/ processes by facilitating evaluation in synergy with other departments of MoHFW as well as other science departments and, 3) introduce these innovations into public health service through health systems research.

The UK partner, NICE, was set up to reduce variation in the availability and quality of the UK's National Health Service's treatments and care, to generate evidence-based guidance and help resolve uncertainty about which medicines, treatments, procedures and devices represent the best quality care. Its International division, NICE International provides technical support to countries around the world to help them strengthen their capacity and decisions in these areas.

The MoU creates provisions for exchange of institutional expertise and experience concerning, clinical practice guidelines pathways and quality standards, application of health technology assessment, and implementation of the decisions of the assessment into clinical policy and practise.

To fulfil its objectives and its mandate, it delineates activities such as collaborative projects between UK and Indian scientists, strengthening of existing institutions responsible for turning evidence to policy, setting-up of technical pilots to develop technical and institutional capacities, engagement with the health service providers as a key stakeholder, and joint awareness raising and policy advocacy through global donors.

The next step would be the setting-up of a Joint Steering Committee in order to translate the commitments of the MoU to a real, mutually-beneficial partnership, and to steer the expertise and enthusiasm of the two countries to create better quality healthcare for their billions of people.

Sir Andrew Dillon: "we are delighted to sign this important MoU with the Department of Health Research, Government of India. It builds on our existing activities in the country and demonstrates our commitment to work together in areas relating to medical and health technology assessment. We look forward to strengthening this engagement further through a fruitful partnership and mutual learning".

Dr Katoch: "India is in the process of developing Health Technology Assessment Board and this MoU between NICE and DHR would strengthen our efforts in this direction.

The two sides would explore the opportunities for collaborative research projects between India and UK scientists interested in mechanism of HTA based decisions for clinical policy and practice".