

India all set to conduct 11th World Congress on Adolescent Health

25 October 2017 | News

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The World Congress on Adolescent Health is coming to India. Held only once every 4 years, the International Association for Adolescent Health's 11th World Congress on Adolescent Health, 'Investing in Adolescent Health – the Future is Now' will be held in New Delhi, India from 27-29 October 2017.

During the press Briefing in New Delhi on 24 October 2017, Professor Susan Sawyer, President, International Association for Adolescent Health, Dr. Sunil Mehra, Executive Director, MAMTA Health Institute for Mother and Child, Sushma Dureja, Deputy Commissioner (Adolescent Health), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Dr. V. Chandra-Mouli, Scientist, Department of Reproductive Health & Research, WHO were present.

Professor Susan Sawyer said: "India has been chosen as the venue for the conference as it has the largest number of adolescents in the world. Policies in India are changing in favor of adolescents. When we started the IAAH in Australia 30 years ago as a resource to help build capacities in the field of adolescent health, we had people only from high income countries but now there is participation from across the world since 90 per cent of the adolescents are in middle and low income countries."

Dr. Sunil Mehra, said: "It is an appropriate time to choose India as the venue for the conference since the country is faced with challenges such as early marriage, early pregnancies, malnutrition and obesity and violence."

The world is home to 1.2 billion adolescents, and India has the largest population of adolescents in the world i.e. 253 million. This demographic makes India a potent host for a global conference on this theme.

The agenda for Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and the new Global Strategy on Women's Children's and Adolescents' Health have brought adolescence to the centre-stage. These agendas recognize the opportunities and contribution of adolescence to achieving a wide array of global health priorities including improvements in communicable diseases (e.g. HIV) and non-communicable diseases, women's health, mental health, nutrition, and more. For example, over half of new HIV cases occur in adolescents, and more than 2 million adolescents are living with HIV. Addressing the global HIV epidemic – and other key global health agendas, will not be achieved without attending better to adolescent health and wellbeing.

David Ross said, "It is indeed heartening to know that the world has started appreciating the issues of the adolescents such as education, behaviour change, smoking, drinking, and mental health which have roots in adolescence but impact the later life. The morality rates among neonates and child mortality has come down but adolescent mortality rates are showing an increasing though most of these are preventable causes such as self-harm and injuries."

Sushma Dureja said, "We (government) has a responsibility towards the adolescents and we cannot achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) without focusing on adolescent health for a life-cycle approach to health."

Dr. V. Chandra-Mouli said: "The world is looking up to India's National Adolescent Health Programme (Rashtriya Kishore Swasthya Karyakram) after its win over polio."

The World Congress will cover topical themes through discussions in sessions such as 'Global adolescent health: Opportunities and challenges', 'Programming for adolescent health in India: RKSK and beyond', 'Toward a gendered approach to adolescent health', 'Mental health and adolescents', and more.

The conference which is the first-of-its kind to be held in India will see the participation of prominent global public health experts as well as policy makers.

The World Congress is being organized under the supportive leadership of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India. MAMTA Health Institute for Mother and Child (MAMTA) is the lead organisation that is hosting the World Congress with a consortium of partners including Pathfinder International, Population Foundation of India (PFI), Population Services International (PSI), and The YP Foundation. The World Congress also has scientific support from Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP), Federation of Obstetric and Gynecological Societies of India (FOGSI), Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) and Trained Nurses Association of India (TNAI).