

## Conference Report: **South Asian Evidence Summit SES 2018**

*Hosted by: Public Health Evidence South Asia (PHESA),  
Prasanna School of Public Health, Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), Manipal*

The South Asian Evidence Summit (SES) is an annual event at PHESA. SES brings together delegates from research and academic institutes across the country and abroad for deliberation and sharing knowledge in evidence-based research and implementation. A pre-conference workshop of two days preceded the conference. Keynote addresses, oral and poster presentations, and panel discussions on relevant topics were held during the conference.

The South Asian Evidence Summit 2018 was held from 31<sup>st</sup> January to 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2018:

31<sup>st</sup> January 2018: Pre-conference workshop on Research into Community through Media

1<sup>st</sup> February 2018: Pre-conference workshop on Translating Evidence into Policy

2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2018: South Asian Evidence Summit, SES 2018

### **Pre-conference workshop**

The pre-conference workshop was a two-day event. It consisted of two half-day workshops and 1 full day workshop. The two workshops on Day 1 of pre-conference workshop i.e. 31<sup>st</sup> January were ‘Mixed methods Systematic Reviews’ and ‘Research to Community through Media’ by resource persons Dr. Shrinivas Darak and Dr. Subhadra Menon respectively. Around 35 delegates attended each of the pre-conference workshops.

Dr. Shrinivas Darak, Senior researcher, PRAYAS health group, Pune, talked about the basics of mixed methods research from the theories and scientific paradigm to the synthesis of primary and systematic review mixed methods research in his workshop. Prof. Subhadra Menon, Executive Director (Research), Kailash Satyarthi Children’s Foundation, New Delhi, talked about packaging research evidence for improved public health outcomes. Professor Menon discussed the current reach and challenges of research to the policymakers and community. The half-day workshop involved participants in group activity for brainstorming and presenting program strategies.

The second day of pre-conference workshop was a full day workshop on ‘Translating evidence to policy’. The invited speakers were Dr. Unnikrishnan B, Associate Dean, Kasturba Medical College, Mangalore, Dr. Juan Pablo Peña-Rosas, Coordinator, Evidence and Program guidance, Department of Nutrition for Health and Development World Health Organization, Geneva, Dr. Anju Sinha, Deputy Director General at the Indian Council for Medical research (ICMR), New Delhi, Prof. Subhadra Menon, Dr. Shrinivas Darak, Dr. Helmut Brand, Director, Prasanna School of Public Health, MAHE and Dr. N Sreekumaran Nair, Head, Department of Biostatistics at JIPMER Puducherry. In the full day workshop, the resource persons with rich experience in respective fields spoke on the various aspects of translating evidence to policy and the paradigm of evidence based research and ended with a panel discussion. Around 40 national and international delegates attended the workshop.

### **Other activities**

A steering committee meeting was held on the evening of 1<sup>st</sup> February at Valley View Hotel. The steering committee discussed the updates and the way forward for PHESA.

## **Conference: South Asian Evidence Summit 2018**

The two-day event began on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2018. Around 70 national and international delegates attended the conference.

### **Inauguration ceremony**

The inauguration function of the conference was held at Interact lecture hall, MAHE. Chief Guest for the event was Dr. Juan Pablo Peña-Rosas, Coordinator, Evidence and Program guidance, Department of Nutrition for Health and Development, who is working with World Health Organization (WHO) at Geneva, Switzerland. Dr. Pablo spoke about the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals which aim at ending poverty, fighting inequality and injustice, and tackling climate change by 2030. The founder and former Director of PHESA, Dr. N. Sreekumaran Nair, who is currently heading the Biostatistics department at JIPMER Puducherry, gave the overview of PHESA and the exemplary contribution it is making to the field of research in health and social sciences. Dr. Nair spoke about how PHESA, situated at Manipal, is continuously working and creating a mark in South Asia region with high quality research and networking with research institutes across the globe. Dr. Poornima Baliga, Pro Vice Chancellor (Health Sciences), MAHE was the guest of honour at the inauguration ceremony and she spoke on how the conference has brought together experts from various disciplines on a single platform for sharing knowledge. Dr. Anju Sinha, Deputy Director General at the Indian Council for Medical research (ICMR), New Delhi, and a member of steering committee at PHESA was present at the occasion. Dr. Sinha spoke on the evidence PHESA is creating through high-quality evidence-based research globally and in South Asia. Dr. Helmut Brand, Director, Prasanna School of Public Health, MAHE, spoke about how the PHESA endeavor is just the beginning, and about the organization's highly valued and predictable position in evidence and policy in the coming decade. The conference abstract book, the annual report of PHESA and certificate program by PHESA was e-released at the inauguration and will be soon available for public viewing on the organization website: [phesa.manipal.edu](http://phesa.manipal.edu).

### **Keynote addresses**

There were six plenary sessions in the two-day conference. The first plenary session on "Food safety risks and their management" was delivered by Dr. Ramesh V Bhat, International Food Safety Specialist, Centre for Science, Society & Culture, Hyderabad. He talked about food safety risks and their management and the economic implications of food safety risks. He mentioned that, food borne diseases cost 0.5% of country's GDP every year. He talked about food poisoning indices in India and also about food safety risk management and its components where he mentioned India has not adopted the risk based approach yet.

The second plenary session was by Dr. Shrinivas Darak, Senior Researcher, Prayas Health Group, Pune on "Adolescent Sexual Health". He spoke on sexual health of youth and the need for a new perspective. He spoke about the large scale study 'Youth in transition' undertaken by PRAYAS and using mixed method and newer approaches followed to capture data such as creating trajectories and using relationship history calendars. The third plenary session on "Evidence Gaps and Maps" delivered by Dr. Ashrita Saran, Evidence Synthesis Specialist, Campbell Collaboration, New Delhi. She spoke about the work Campbell Collaboration is doing and use of Evidence Gaps and Maps, a systematic presentation of the available evidence, to assess and consolidate evidence. The fourth plenary session on "Policies on nutrition" by Dr. Juan Pablo Peña-Rosas, Coordinator, Evidence and Programme Guidance, Nutrition for Health and Development, World Health Organization, Geneva. Dr. Pablo spoke about the newer guidelines related to

Nutrition in public health and how to mainstream nutrition into public health. According to him, Nutrition was central to the agenda of Sustainable Development Goals, 2030. He spoke on bio fortification of crops and challenges related to it, GBC guidelines, rapid review guidelines and WHO guidelines where nutrition is a sub-component, even if the guidelines covers a larger topic such as guidelines for integrated care of elderly.

The fifth plenary session was on “Meta-analysis: guides or misguides?” by Dr N. Sreekumaran Nair. Dr. Nair spoke on how meta-analysis not just being a statistical analysis but that it has to be logically related with the factors that can affect the meta-analysis and give a false association or estimate. The sixth plenary session was on “Evidence synthesis from demographer’s perspective” by Dr. Tobias Vogt. Dr. Tobias spoke about the demography studies and reliability of evidence from them.

### **Panel discussions**

There were two panel discussions: Panel Discussion on “Health Technology Assessment” with Dr. Arun G Mayya, Associate Dean and Professor, Department of Physiotherapy, SOAHS, Manipal, Dr. Anju Sinha and Dr. Angela Brand, Full Professor, Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences (FHML), Professorial Fellow at MERIT (Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology), Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, Faculty of Humanities and Sciences (FHS), Maastricht University, The Netherlands, Director of the European Centre for Public Health Genomics (ECPHG), Dr. T. M. A Pai Endowed Chair on Public Health Genomics, Head, Department of Public Health Genomics, School of Life Sciences, MAHE, Manipal and moderated by Prof. Helmut Brand. The panel discussed the current scope of health technology assessment (HTA) and upcoming research opportunities in the field of HTA.

The second panel discussion was on the topic “Evidence Synthesis-scope & opportunities in LMICs” with panelists, Dr. Unnikrishnan B, Dr. Juan Pablo, Dr. Joe Varghese, Dr. Ashrita Saran, Dr. Helmut Brand, Dr. N. Sreekumaran Nair moderated by Dr. Bhumika T.V., Assistant Professor, Coordinator, PHESA. The panelists discussed scope and opportunities of evidence synthesis. Dr. Pablo suggested more contextual evidence can be supportive, and Dr. Nair suggested the implementation side can give feedback for improving evidence from the field.

### **Oral presentations**

The sessions for the oral presentations were divided into six *viz.* Neonatal health, Maternal and Child Health, Multidisciplinary areas, Nutrition in public health, Methodologies in Public Health Research and Social issues in Public Health. Each of thematic areas and sessions had related oral presentation under the theme. There were 22 oral presentations in all ranging from wide range of research topics and areas. The research-related interaction followed the oral presentations in form of discussion.

### **Poster presentations**

There were 19 poster presentations. It was a competition judged on the second day of conference. The poster presentations were judged on the basis of relevance of topic, content, presentation and answering capability. The first and second prizes and certificates were given. The second position was shared by three participants.

**Valedictory program**

The chief guest for the valedictory ceremony was Dr. Narayana Sabhahit, Registrar, Manipal Academy of Higher Education and the other guests were Dr. Helmut brand, Dr. Nair and Dr. Unnikrishnan B. Feedback of the delegates was given, prize distribution for poster competition was done. The vote of thanks was given by Dr. Bhumika.

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