

DBT's multi-centric Dementia Science Programme

By Dr. Bilqeesa Bhat

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India, has funded a multi-centric Dementia Science Programme involving clinicians and basic science researchers from seven centres spread across the length and breadth of the country to gain better insights into dementia, a devastating neurological condition.

Programme aims to arrive at a reliable estimate of incidence and prevalence of dementia in the Country along with basic research and advanced brain imaging. An important component of the Programme is to develop biomarkers and to understand the lifestyle, environmental and genetic factors that contribute to the development of dementia, or have a protective effect. Another goal is to establish long-term Data Storage Facility and Bio-banking of samples from normal individuals and the dementia spectrum patients for future studies on dementia.

All the participating centres will use uniform criteria for diagnosis and classification of dementia. Pilot studies have been conducted and recruitment of patients is in progress. It is hoped that the Programme will provide useful insights into dementia that will help in formulation of national level policies. Dementia Science Programme is coordinated by Director, NBRC and co-coordinated by Shiv Sharma, NBRC and Dr. NK Arora, INCLEN Trust International.

Dementia is a memory impairment condition. In the advanced stage, the patients show severe memory loss and deficits in other cognitive domains. With our aging population, the number of individuals suffering from dementia is projected to increase substantially in the coming decades. This will tremendously increase burden on the healthcare system, the care givers and the society. The Alzheimer's disease accounts for majority of the dementia cases.

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