

Necessary to look at women's health to ensure her rights: Dr. Renu Swarup

By Bilqeesa Bhat

Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI), a Faridabad-based DBT's institute organised a workshop to train about 100 attendees on medical image analysis and artificial intelligence (AI)-based solutions for problems of maternal and child health. Clinicians, physician-scientists, biologists, computer vision scientists and young researchers from THSTI and the neighboring Regional Centre for Biotechnology (RCB) attended the workshop.

Maternal and child health is a crucial indicator of the health of society, particularly in low-middle income countries. "This year's theme for International Women's Day is realizing women's rights and what more can we look at other than looking at women's health issues," said Dr. Renu Swarup in her message setting the stage before the workshop.

A significant challenge is the lack of cutting-edge applications for prevention and early diagnosis of diseases that have public health implications. One way forward is to use the recent advances in medical image analysis to address these issues. Machine learning, especially deep learning, is an innovative method to identify, classify, and quantify patterns in medical images to develop relevant tools for clinical and public health applications. Additionally, these tools can provide an understanding of underlying biological mechanisms. Interdisciplinary groups working in synergy would further augment this initiative.

The workshop brought together different perspectives on the scope of medical image analysis for augmenting research to find innovative solutions in Maternal and Child Health. Multiple researchers based in India and the University of Oxford came together. The workshop was funded by GARBH-INI (A DBT India initiative) that was declared as an Atal Jai Anusandhan Unati Mission of DBT last year.

Dr. Swarup pointed out that GARBH-Ini being a comprehensive study, is investigating many different aspects of pregnancy – working with IIT Madras to develop technologies for early prediction of preterm birth, the effect of maternal nutrition and pollution on pregnancy among others. The workshop had four major sessions comprising keynote addresses, research question-driven seminars, presentations, and panel discussions.

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