

Prof Gagandeep Kang delivered the Prof S P Ray-Chaudhuri Memorial Lecture at Banaras Hindu University

By Dr Bilqeesa Bhat



Professor Gagandeep Kang, Executive Director, Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI), Faridabad delivered the Prof. S P Ray-Chaudhuri Memorial lecture titled, ‘We shall overcome some day’, the theme which most of us relate with hope. Prof. Kang described the efforts around building a clinical research ecosystem in India at the historical Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

Our problem, our solutions

Prof. Kang said that, ‘the rotavirus vaccine was an innovation by Indian scientists working in India where public private partnership resulted in a new product in the country. There were vaccines to prevent rotavirus infection in children; so why have a new one? This vaccine was tailor made to benefit and be more effective for Indian children.’

Addressing to question, how was this feat accomplished? She said, ‘scientists and clinicians came together to establish high quality pre-clinical and clinical research systems that include

experimental medicine. This was also to challenge the mindset that we are being exploited as guinea pigs by multinationals.’

Human guinea pigs. What’s wrong with that?

Painstakingly long waits for new products and protocols from more industrialized countries has been a huge limitation for advances in medicine in India. The successes in the pharma and vaccine industry have been due to low prices and high volumes, not due to innovative new technologies and treatments. And the latter needs high quality clinical research systems in India.

“Think about how many more vaccines we could do if we focused on improving the links between academic medical institutions, industry and regulatory systems. There are currently many challenges in building a clinical research ecosystem in India, but the potential impact on patient care and the development of preventive and curative treatments will be worth the effort”, writes Prof. Kang.

Rotavirus is the most common cause of dehydrating gastroenteritis (infection in the gut) and is responsible for about 50,000 deaths annually worldwide. The introduction of Rotavac in the National Immunization Program is expected to bring down this number.

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