

SCTIMST receives UK-MRC grant to study management of patients with multi-morbidity in Indian PHCs

Multi-morbidity is the co-occurrence of two or more chronic conditions, and treatment of such conditions becomes challenging. Concerns over multi-morbidity have become a priority among many health policymakers and healthcare providers.

Scientists from Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute of Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST), an Institute of National Importance under Department of Science and Technology, will conceptualise how health systems manage patients with multi-morbidity in primary health care settings in India with support from the Medical Research Council of UK.

They have just received approval for a grant of Rs 2 Crore from the UK-Medical Research Council (UK-MRC) for the grant proposal developed by Dr Jeemon Panniyammakal, Assistant Professor, Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science Studies (AMCHSS), of SCTIMST in collaboration with Scientists from University of Birmingham, UK.

The study titled 'Systems thinking approach to developing an integrated and patient-centred intervention model for multi-morbidity care in primary care settings in India' directly builds on findings from two recently funded studies from AMCHSS to assess the pattern and distribution of multi-morbidity in Kerala in India.

The research which will use a system thinking approach will be conducted by an interdisciplinary research team of health system researchers, epidemiologists, and social scientists. They will conduct the study in two phases which includes identification of potential interventions for managing multi-morbidity in primary care and development of the final intervention tools for integrated management of multi-morbidity evaluation.

In the first phase, potential interventions will be identified and proposed to address gaps in the current system from patients, providers and health system perspectives. A causal loop modelling will be employed to identify feedback loops and evaluate the impacts of the potential interventions at the level of patients and care providers. The study will also look into ways in which care for people with multiple chronic conditions can be organised and integrated within the community through community health workers. In the second phase, the results of the causal loop analysis will be linked to decision making on the implementation of the intervention. Appropriate tools for the intervention will then be developed.

The total value of the current grant is approximately Rs 2 Crores. It will also make the investigators eligible to apply for a confirmatory study to test the effectiveness of the intervention model as a major grant application after the successful completion of this project.

The interventions will include the Centre's previous work in the area of clinical handover, evaluation methods for complex health system interventions, and primary care coordination for global risk reduction in primary care settings in India.