

# Oncologists from India, U.K. poised for collaboration in research, treatment

Special Correspondent

**CHENNAI:** India and the United Kingdom are poised at the very edge of an era of collaborations to fight the battle against the Emperor of Maladies: Cancer.

Experts from both countries will examine the possibilities of working together to create cancer registries, undertaking basic, translational and clinical research, and evolving protocols for diagnosing and treating common Indian cancers. They met under one roof at the Indo-U.K. Oncology Summit, organised by the Indo-British Health Initiative and British Deputy High Commission here on Friday.

"When it comes to cancer, all countries are facing the same challenges," Lord Kakkar, Professor of Surgery, University College London, who led a healthcare delegation to India from the U.K.

"While the challenges are real, nations have also been able to do much better at treating the condition. Cancer care delivery can only be successful if it is comprehensive and tailored to the needs of the local population," he added.

It was important to have appropriate screening programmes, and be relentless and vigilant in raising awareness among the public - on risk factors and screening facilities, Lord Kakkar explained. He stressed the need to have proper baseline data in order to launch interventions, and hoped that joint ventures would emerge in the fields of

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establishing cancer registries in India. Currently one of the problems the country faces is the lack of accurate data on incidence, more so in rural areas.

Prithvi Mohandas, founder and secretary, IBHI, said one of the big advantages of the formal tie-up with the United Kingdom was that India could learn from the nation's experiences in fighting cancer.

"We can skirt the problems the U.K. had, as there is no need to reinvent the wheel," he added. The focus would be on Common Indian Cancers and their prevention, screening and treatment.

Some of the key aspects of a successful cancer care programme would be to improve access to diagnosis and treatment pathways, and involve the general practitioners in the process, according to Arnie Purushotham, Professor of Breast Cancer, King's College London. Progress in both survival and mortality are largely dependent on early diagnosis.

Rajendra Badwe, Director, Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai, presented a picture of the Indian scenario in cancer care.

Mike Nithavrianakis, British Deputy

High Commissioner Chennai, encouraged the U.K. faculty to represent the strength of their institutions and areas in which their expertise would help India. Later in the evening, an auction of select photographs clicked as part of the Carewalk initiative by IBHI and Chennai Photowalk was held, to raise funds to support the Mahesh Memorial Trust.