SIXTIETH NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TUBERCULOSIS AND CHEST DISEASES: A BRIEF REVIEW

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The 60th National Conference on Tuberculosis and Chest Diseases (NATCON 2006) was held in the newly built Convention Centre of King George’s Medical University, Lucknow, from 23rd to 26th February, 2006. The Conference was organised by Department of Pulmonary Medicine, K.G. Medical University under the joint auspices of Tuberculosis Association of India, Uttar Pradesh State TB Association and Association of College of Chest Physicians (ACCP, North chapter). The Reception Committee and Organising Committee, appointed by State Association, under the overall leadership of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Professor and Head, Dept. of Pulmonary Medicine, K.G. Medical University and Organising Secretary of the Conference, had made elaborate arrangements for making the conference a success.

Over 400 delegates from different parts of the country attended the Conference and made it a memorable event.

Preceding inauguration of the main Conference, an interesting and highly educative programme of Continuing Medical Education (CME) had been scheduled on 23rd February. Dr. Kamal Sahni, Director, Medical Education, Uttar Pradesh, inaugurated the CME programme. In addition to lectures, there were two symposia and one oration included in the CME programme. In symposium on “Newer Diagnostic Techniques in TB”, focus was on current status of role of serology and molecular biology in TB and speakers explained their experiences in the field and hoped molecular biology to be helpful in diagnosis of difficult cases of TB and in development of newer specific tools for diagnosis. In other symposium, speakers dealt with management of TB in special situations like HIV and TB, TB and Pregnancy and Extra-pulmonary TB.

Dr. S.K. Katiyar spoke about new guidelines of management of HIV & TB co-infected persons and outcome of such patients. Ranbaxy Robert Koch Oration delivered by Dr. Lalit Kant, Senior DDG, Indian Council of Medical Research, New Delhi, dealt with Research Priority setting strategy in Tuberculosis. He highlighted the importance of operational research in management in the era of RNTCP.

In the evening, the main Conference was inaugurated with great fanfare by the Chief Guest, Dr. R.P. Singh, Vice Chancellor of Lucknow University in the presence of all delegates and dignitaries. Other guests, sitting on the dais, included Dr. A.M. Kar, Vice Chancellor of K.G. Medical University, Dr. P.R. Narayanan, President of the Conference, Dr. V.K. Arora and Dr. M.M. Singh, Vice Chairmen, TB Association of India, Padma Shri Rani Lila Ram Kumar Bhargava, Chairman of UP TB Association, Dr. B.N. Gupta, Honorary Secretary of UP TB Association and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Organising Secretary of the Conference. On account of unavoidable absence of the Director General of Health Services (DGHS) and Chairman of Tuberculosis Association of India, his keynote address was read by Dr. V.K. Arora, Vice-Chairman of TB Association of India. The salient points made in the DGHS’s key note address related to encouraging and noteworthy progress made by RNTCP in India, which is now the fastest growing DOTS programme in the world. With great satisfaction, he announced that the whole country will have access to DOTS services by the mid of March 2006. He also highlighted the role of NGOs, private practitioners and medical colleges in the fight against tuberculosis and called upon them for their enhanced support to sustain the progress made in RNTCP. Dr. V.K. Arora, Vice Chairman, TAI,

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highlighted the role and activities of TAI in TB control programme. He stressed on two new initiatives i.e. creating TB-HIV cell in each State Association and increasing the activities of State Associations. He also talked about the significance of TB Seal Campaign and informed the gathering that TB Seal of India had won the second best award in World TB Conference. Dr. P.R. Narayanan, in his presidential address, stressed on the importance of development of new anti-tubercular drugs and newer vaccines against tuberculosis. He also highlighted the importance of prevention of drug resistance and early implementation of DOT-plus programme in India.

Then followed the colourful ‘Award Giving Away’ ceremony by the Chief Guest Dr. R.P. Singh. Dr. M.M. Singh, Vice Chairman, TAI, read out each citation and the crowd gave loud clapping as each awardee received the award. The Dr. P.K. Sen TAI Gold Medal Oration Award went to Dr. P.S. Shanker, Emeritus Professor of Medicine and Director, M.R. Medical College, Gulbarga; the Ranbaxy-Robert Koch Oration award was given to Dr. Lalit Kant, Senior Deputy Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research, New Delhi; the Lupin TAI Oration award was bagged by Dr. G.R. Khatri, Global Contacts Director, Fidelis, IUATLD, New Delhi; while Dr. O.A. Sarma Guest Lecture was awarded to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Prof. & Head, Department of Pulmonary Medicine, K.G. Medical University, Lucknow. Dr. B.K. Sikand Memorial Gold Medal, awarded to a DTCD student, who stands first in DTCD examination of Delhi University, was awarded to Dr. Deepak Bansal of Indore. Dr. Sangeeta Sharma presented the consensus achieved between Indian Association of Pediatricians (IPA) and RNTCP managers for inclusion of children in DOTS. Dr. Rohit Sareen explained about requisition before introducing DOTS plus, its schedules and monitoring of patients. Dr. G.R. Khatri in his Lupin-TAI Oration went through the progress of RNTCP from 1966 to 2002. He explained the steps taken to initiate the programme, resource generation, pilot testing and the expansion of programme in India.

The Scientific Programme of the Conference began in the morning of 24th February. Highlight of the session was a panel discussion moderated by Dr. Naresh Patel. The speakers (Dr. S.K. Katiyar, Dr. S.K. Lohadia, Dr. Katoch and Dr. Rohit Sareen) discussed the use of immuno-modulators in treatment of tuberculosis, especially MDR cases. They presented the findings of trials of use of Myco Vacciæ as an immuno-modulator. Dr. Sareen pointed out that recommendations can be made after they get results of a multi-centric study which is under progress. This was followed by a symposium of RNTCP moderated by Dr. V.K. Arora. He highlighted the future strategies of TB control in India in form of introduction of DOT plus in a phased manner and conducting DRS (Drug Resistance Surveys) in different states of India so as to sustain the achievement of RNTCP in India. Dr. Rohit Sareen explained about requisition before introducing DOTS plus, its schedules and monitoring of patients. Dr. G.R. Khatri in his Lupin-TAI Oration went through the progress of RNTCP from 1966 to 2002. He explained the steps taken to initiate the programme, resource generation, pilot testing and the expansion of programme in India.

Afternoon session started with a symposium on ‘Bronchial Asthma’ moderated by Dr. S.N. Gaur. He highlighted the prevalence of asthma in cities, which was followed by deliberations on ‘Difficult Asthma’ by Dr. Solanki, ‘Asthma in elderly’ by Dr. K.B. Gupta and ‘Management of Acute Severe Asthma’ by Dr. G.C. Khilnani. Free papers session

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on ‘RNTCP’ included experiences of many authors in implementation of DOTS in their area and results of long term follow up. One of the papers dealt with critical evaluation of Cat III and concluded that most of the patients put on Cat III require Cat I treatment. Another study from Chennai depicted post ATT status of Cat II patients in form of residual lesion and relapses. A study from New Delhi TB Centre observed seasonal variation of presentation of chest symptomatics and pulmonary tuberculosis cases, which was found more in summer season as compared to winter.

Post lunch session included assorted papers. One author presented manifestation of cutaneous tuberculosis in rural India and found scrofuloderma to be the commonest finding. A study from Patna found only DOTS therapy inadequate from TB of cervical lymph node as significant number of patients were left with residual glands after completion of treatment. Two studies from NTI Bangalore studied the awareness about TB and health seeking behavioural pattern of rural slum dwellers and concluded that less than 50% of symptomatics were aware of facilities and utilizes them. A study from Maulana Azad Medical College analysed time-lapse between appearance of symptoms and contacting health provider. They concluded that even after seven years of implementation of RNTCP in Delhi, only 14% of chest symptomatics are contacting DOT Centres as their first health reaching contact.

Scientific session on the morning of 25th February started with free papers on MDR-TB. Dr. Rajasekharan presented treatment outcome of two MDR-TB patients in relation to the resistance pattern. Dr. Rohit Sareen presented his experiences of DOTS plus which is being implemented as pilot study in their area. A study from Chennai evaluated use of diagnostic tools for MDR tuberculosis and concluded that upto 80% of patients do not require any change in WHO recommended schedule even after getting susceptibility testing reports. This was followed by P.K. Sen TAI Gold Medal Oration delivered by Dr. P.S. Shanker. He described advances in pathogenesis and management of COPD. He highlighted latest theories in the pathogenesis and management strategies according to WHO guidelines. This was followed by an interesting symposium on clinical issues in COPD, moderated by Dr. V.K. Jain. He introduced the topic, its etiology and prevalence. Dr. A.K. Janmeja spoke about early diagnosis of COPD. Dr. Mathur spoke about role of oxygen therapy and steroids. Dr. H.G. Varudkar described role of non-invasive pulmonary ventilators.

Dr. O.A. Sarma Honour Guest Lecture was delivered by Dr. Rajendra Prasad. He spoke on ‘Issues in MDR-TB – Practitioners view point’. He described spectrum of MDR cases, their resistance pattern and treatment outcome. He concluded by saying ‘Adoption of DOTS to prevent MDR strains and careful introduction of second line drugs to treat patients with MDR are the top priorities for proper control of MDR-TB’.

Afternoon session’s highlight was symposium on Lung Cancer – moderated by Dr. D. Behera. He introduced the topic and described the etiological factors and its prevalence in India. Dr. Jaiswal of LRS Institute, New Delhi, described role of fibroptic bronchoscopy (FOB) in diagnosis of lung cancer. He showed video graphic presentation of FOB procedure in normal and diseased patients. Dr. M.L. Bhatt described role of radiation therapy in management of lung cancer.

Highlight of 26th February morning session was a guest lecture by Dr. O.A. Sarma on ‘Historical Anecdotes in tuberculosis’. He traced the journey of this ‘captain of all the men of death’ from ancient age to the introduction of DOTS – RNTCP in India. His presentation included picture of TB Seals of India in past years and many other countries which was appreciated by the audience.

The concluding session was held on 26th February, 2006, under the Chairmanship of Dr. M.M. Singh. Dr. Singh thanked the organisers of the Conference profusely for organizing the Conference at a very short notice. As required under Rule 3(xiii) of Rules and Regulations of TAI, following were elected as the members of the Central Committee: Dr. Rohit Sareen, Dr. S.K.
Katiyar, Dr. V.K. Dhingra and Dr. Rajendra Prasad for one year.

Dr. M.M. Singh, Vice Chairman (OR), proposed a vote of thanks. He said that the conference scientific contents/programme were of high standard. The hospitality and the food/banquets, etc., were simply the gourmets delight. The cultural programme showed the glimpses of tradition and culture of Lucknow. He appreciated the excellent arrangements made for the conference by the Organising Committee of the NATCON 2006. He thanked all the delegates, who had come from all parts of the country.