

26.03.2010



Director's Speech to the Delegates of the 4th Biennial Meeting of Asia-Oceania Organization on Genital Infections and Neoplasia (AOGIN-2010).

Honourable Chief Guest, Shri Prithviraj Chavanji, Minister of State, Department of Science and Technology, my esteemed Friend Prof. Keerti V. Shah, Prof. Jong s. Park, organizing committee-Members, distinguished speakers both from India and abroad, invited guests, delegates and ladies and gentlemen,

Firstly, I welcome you all to this Meeting which is deliberating on a topic of both national and international importance for women's health in general and on genital infections and cervical cancer in particular. This is a big huge public health problem. You are aware that cervical cancer is the 2nd most common cancer afflicting women worldwide, and also in India. We have to work for awareness building that cervical cancer is a curable disease, if detected early and it is also a preventable disease through vaccination.

Secondly, I would like to congratulate the organizers, Prof. Neerja Bhatla and her colleagues for making it happen here in Delhi so successfully, attracting such a large number of eminent experts on this field. The meeting's theme for 2010 being "Towards eradication of Cervical Cancer", itself is a testimony of hope for better health and through future efforts by this group of research scientists, clinicians, social scientists and all others, involved in the project, I believe, a solution for combating this problem will be available soon to people of India.

With the advances in science and technology and increased interest of public, government and people, an indigenous new solution to prevent and control cervical cancer in India will emerge and I hope, our scientists, clinicians will be able to provide leadership in this field of health sciences and contribute to the world knowledge society.

That HPV (16/18) cause cervical cancer, is now established in more than 70% of such cancer patients and 2 vaccines are also available in the market. Dr. Neerja Bhatla and other colleagues in India are engaged in clinical trials on this therapy to prevent this disease. However I will caution that while using these vaccines, all necessary patient-safety measures are taken.

Regular screening of women for vaginal hygiene including a PAP study and education to women on safe sex, could help early identification and diagnosis of the disease. After all HPV infections are a sexually transmitted disease . This needs to be viewed in that perspectives. Studies have shown that such intervention has demonstrated significant reduction of cancer related mortality and morbidity. The burden of the disease has been reported to be very high in India as per estimates made by the epidemiologists.

HPVs are also known to cause Oral Cavity cancer in about 30-40% of such cancer patients. There appears to be a direct relationship of cervical cancer and oral cavity cancer with sexual practice and behaviour such as oral sex and with multiple partners. These are few issues, I think, need to be looked into and proper educative guidelines be framed by you all for improving overall health and also to prevent these diseases (Cervical/Oral Cancers/HPV infections) through properly made awareness programmes.

Friends!

Although, DNA testing of cervical mucosa (also oral cavity mucosa) could be a better test to early identify the presence of causative HPVs, a tissue diagnosis is always required for cancer or pre-cancerous treatment.

DNA testing from cervical sample is important for prevention and control. Studies have shown that a single DNA testing for HPVs significantly benefited in reducing the disease prevalence and thereby reducing morbidity and mortality. DNA testing is also improving, in terms of its technology. However it is costly and may not be affordable to all patients. We need to serve the people using newer technology and improved scientific methods for cancer prevention and treatment. An affordable but reliable new DNA testing technique for HPVs is therefore needed. I believe it is in the process of development and a new technique is being used in China for its validity.

Ladies & Gentlemen!

The laboratory set ups for HPV research are also costly and it requires dedicated group of experts and technical staff. I would appeal to the Honourable Minister that the Government may at least support for establishing a few advanced centres where such DNA testing facilities could be made available to clinicians and scientists to study this disease for improving our knowledge about the disease in India and such a facility will eventually improve diagnosis & therapy, resulting in better women's health in India. I would also request him to launch a National Cervical Cancer prevention and Control Programme by the government and the professional societies dealing with women's health in India, I can assure you, Sir, will

**collaborate and participate in it to make such a programme
successful.**

Friends, I thank you all for your indulgence.

Jai Hind,

**Professor Ramesh C. Deka
Director, AIIMS, New Delhi**