Eighth Annual Conference of the Society for Indian Academy of Medical Genetics (IAMG 2023)

The 8th Annual Conference of the Society for Indian Academy of Medical Genetics (IAMG 2023) was organized by Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi, and held at the Leela Ambience Hotel, Gurgaon from November 30th to December 2nd, 2023. Centred on the theme ***'Translating OMICS into Clinical Care'***, the conference was aimed to address the nuances of "BIG DATA" for patient diagnosis, novel gene discovery, cutting edge 'omic' technologies and functional assays to provide answers for patients and families with rare, undiagnosed disorders.

The two specialized pre-conference workshops on autism spectrum disorder and 'Hands-on Genomic Sequencing' set the stage, providing deep insights into these critical areas of genetic research. The latter entailed a dedicated interaction with the registered participants with preworkshop tutorials and hands-on genomic data visualization and interpretation. The feedback response to the workshops was very appreciative of the content and conduct of the session towards the aim to hands-on knowledge and ability enhancement.

Day 1 of the conference was replete with expert-led sessions focusing on advanced topics such as gene therapies, the use of animal models in medical research, and the intricate genetics of inflammatory bowel disease. The President's plenary session set the theme of the conference with information of the extensive ongoing genomic research in the country, thinking out of the box in this innovative landscape, especially addressed to the young geneticists, gene-disease correlation, and translation to the clinic. The Dr SS Agarwal Oration was awarded to Dr David Adams, National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), National Institutes of Health (NIH), USA. His oration was exemplary for the work performed with “patients without a diagnosis” despite a multitude of tests and evaluations. The day was further marked by the significant release of Carrier Screening Recommendations by SIAMG, alongside the Society of Fetal Medicine (SFM) and the Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India (FOGSI), followed by a series of intellectually stimulating debates

Day 2 commenced with engaging platform presentations, leading into insightful talks on dysmorphology, multi-omics, and the broad spectrum of applications of genetics in healthcare. A highlight was the presentation of the Dr IC Verma Outstanding Researcher Award to Dr Ashutosh Halder from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, marking his contribution to the field of medical genetics in the country. An informative panel discussion on providing equitable access to genetic diagnosis and treatment provided many valuable insights. A session titled 'The Firing Brigade' offered young geneticists an exciting opportunity to present and discuss their innovative work in their early career path.

The final day continued the momentum with the presentation of the Dr SS Agarwal Young Scientist Award to Dr Neelam Saini from the Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS), Hyderabad, for her publication in the journal 'Prenatal Diagnosis'. The day was further enriched with discussions on various therapeutic approaches and cancer genomics, culminating in an informative quiz for residents and the valedictory session. This session not only wrapped up the event but also set the tone for future exploration and research in the field of OMICS.

The 182 selected abstracts from attending delegates were selected for poster or platform presentations and were judged by experienced geneticists for their scientific content, innovation, and presentation. Novel two-minute rapid-fire oral presentations were awarded to share the immense work happening in India.

In essence, IAMG 2023 served as a confluence of knowledge, innovation, and inspiration, fostering a spirit of learning and discovery. It was a platform to meet old friends, make new, and foster collaborations to work towards the SIAMG principles of “Test, Treat and Teach” to leave no patient behind.

Awardees

Dr Shyam S Agarwal Oration for the Year 2023

Recipient - Dr David Adams

Dr David Adams, MD, PhD, Deputy Director of Clinical Genomics at the National Human Genome Research Institute, National Institutes of Health (NIH), Bethesda and Co-Director of the NIH Undiagnosed Diseases Program, is a world-renowned expert in the field of medical genetics. His clinical and research contributions, particularly in the area of undiagnosed rare disorders, have been immense. His current research focuses on the development of informatics tools for Undiagnosed Diseases and bioinformatics approaches for reanalysis of negative or inconclusive clinical genomics studies, and creation of data sharing strategies for undiagnosed disease cases. His other research interests include the molecular biology of oculocutaneous albinism and the mucosal biology of celiac disease. During his distinguished medical career spanning around three decades, Dr Adams has published more than 100 peer-reviewed papers. He has been conferred several awards and distinctions for his outstanding academic and research work including the NIH Director's Award for his work on the NIH Common Fund Undiagnosed Diseases Network Working Group.

Dr I C Verma Outstanding Researcher Award for the Year 2023

Recipient – Dr Ashutosh Halder

Dr Ashutosh Halder, Professor and Head of the Department of Reproductive Biology at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, is a well-known and respected figure in the field of medical genetics in India. His research primarily focuses on reproductive biology and prenatal genetics, including the genetic basis of recurrent pregnancy losses, premature ovarian failure, preimplantation biology, and fetal malformations. He has published over 100 research papers, edited four books, and authored many book chapters. He is a fellow/ member of several prestigious academic bodies including the National Academy of Medical Sciences and the Indian Academy of Biomedical Sciences. He has led several institutional and extramural research projects as principal investigator. He has mentored around 15 PhD scholars. He is recognized as one of the leading experts in India in the area of molecular cytogenetics and has been instrumental in establishing a state-of-the-art Molecular Cytogenetics laboratory in AIIMS, New Delhi. He is on the editorial board of many journals and is peer reviewer for numerous national and international journals. He is a Core Accreditation Committee member of NABL for Genetics, a Task Force Member and Assessor for Medical Genetics of the National Medical Commission of India, and an expert member of several other national committees.