

Indian Medical Pharmacologists Association: New Beginning

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Received February 4, 2015. Accepted February 5, 2015

Dear Sir,

Pharmacology is a rapidly evolving field. In India, it all started when the Association of Physiologists and Pharmacologists (APP) was formed and the budding field of pharmacology had its first foot in independent India. In due course, pharmacologists thought of a separate space for themselves and so the Indian Pharmacological Society (IPS) was formed. It included pharmacologists from all fields of research, including medicine, dentistry, veterinary, AYUSH, and basic sciences (<http://www.indianpharmacology.org/history.html>). It has been four and half decade since the origin of the IPS, which grew bigger and stronger. Recently, the IPS represented India under the purview of Indian National Science Academy (INSA) at the World Congress of Clinical and Basic Pharmacology (WCP) 2014, Cape Town, organized by International Union of Pharmacology (IUPHAR).^[1] Never to forget the efforts of those pioneers in the IPS, who had set the tone in India that eventually got waned as the time progressed. With the rapidly progressing trends in pharmacology practice, the IPS had failed to carve a niche for itself and kept its reputation at stake with the recent claims of alleged malpractice in IPS elections. Eventually, people have failed to differentiate medical pharmacologists from pharmacologists of allied branches. It is not about who is being superior to the other, but acquiring the medical knowledge through MBBS practice demands a separate platform for MD/DM/DNB pharmacologists to unite, explore, and innovate. Hence, Indian Medical Pharmacologists Association (IMPA) was formed by a team of like-minded MD Pharmacology graduates. This represents the new era in medical pharmacology practice. The IMPA ensembles young and experienced pharmacologists both in the academia and in the pharmaceutical industry. The inaugural meet of the IMPA was held at Hotel Anandha Inn, Puducherry, India, on November 21, 2014.

Few things should be very clear. First, the IMPA is not a competing or counter society for the existing societies in India

as each society has its own aims and objectives. Second, it is not to segregate the fellow pharmacologists of allied fields. As it is evident that splinter bodies^[2] have been formed for physiology, pharmacy, veterinary, Ayurveda, and so on, it is high time that medical pharmacologists to have their own association. Third, the IMPA is looking forward for a collaboration with the INSA to promote medical pharmacology practice, which is in a lockdown state with no updates and revision being made in the MBBS and MD pharmacology curriculum (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Indian-Medical-Pharmacologists-Association-IMPA>). The outcomes of this un-updated teaching are as follows: (i) doctors practice irrational prescriptions, hence paving way for the birth of superbugs; and (ii) the failure to produce single NCE from India.

Keeping these things in mind, the aims and objectives of the IMPA were framed:

1. Revising the current MD pharmacology curriculum and removing old methods in pharmacology research as well as teaching.
2. Introducing clinical pharmacology at the undergraduate level to improve rational prescription of medicines.
3. Establishing the clinical importance of pharmacology and imparting therapeutics in pharmacology teaching.
4. Creating a bridge between academics and the industry in the conduct of clinical trials and research. With this, research can be carried out in a cost-effective way and students pursuing MD pharmacology can have a firsthand exposure to industrial research. This exposure of MD postgraduates to both industry and academics will ease in right decision-making during job hunt.
5. Creating opportunities such as short-term internship at the MNC/CRO: the students eligible for this internship will be selected by industrial experts weighing the applicant's goal and vision for the need of internship.
6. Sensitizing the need for therapeutic drug monitoring centers and pharmacogenomics testing laboratory all over India.
7. Implementing case- and problem-based learning methods as method of assessment in examination both for undergraduates and postgraduates.
8. Promoting ethical pharmaceutical marketing practices, by conducting training of prescribing physicians on topics such as clinical trial methodologies, critical evaluation of literature, concepts of patents and generics, and pharmacovigilance.

Access this article online

Website: <http://www.ijmsph.com>

DOI: 10.5455/ijmsph.2015.04022015118



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9. Getting the IMPA recognized by the INSA and the IUPHAR to tap sufficient funds for the selection of an outstanding researcher in postgraduation period, assistant professor period, associate professor period, and professor period to attend international conferences/workshops every year. This will be mainly done to create interest in the minds of young budding researchers and also to recognize the work of the senior faculties, both in academics and in industry.
10. Establishing the importance of pharmacology in the field of medical therapeutics, which is the ultimate long-term goal.

The innovative activities so far done by the IMPA are the following:

1. *Webinars*: The IMPA takes pride to announce that it is the first such association to conduct a webinar for free of cost for its members. The topics shall be covering the various aspects of industrial pharmacology with real-life scenario discussions. Here, the participants can interact with the MD pharmacologists from the pharmaceutical industry and get answers to their queries. The video recordings of the webinar will be available online for future reference and also for the members of the IMPA who missed to attend the event.
2. *WhatsApp/Facebook-based e-teaching*: Few topics regarding clinical pharmacology, real-life situations at a trial site or clinical cases will be given by the DM graduates to all the MD postgraduates and assistant/associate professors for discussion, and the contents of the discussion are summarized by the volunteers for that particular day/week to upload on a cloud service so that it will be shared with others on the Facebook group as well.
3. *Separate Web space for MD pharmacologists to connect and interact*: This will ease the interaction of academia and industry. Also, this will provide a user friendly interface for knowledge sharing, being updated on drug releases, regulatory amendments, and also a good crowdsourcing platform for corporate clients.

4. *Revision in MD curriculum*: As soon as the IMPA got registered as an association, the steps to revise the curriculum began. A panel comprising of MD/DM pharmacologists, from academia and industry, is preparing a draft on revised curriculum that will be circulated to all MD pharmacologists for their opinion and suggestion.

The IMPA is being hosted at impas.in. The Web page provides an online payment gateway for membership subscriptions with exclusive membership privileges. Also, it shows the latest events, news and updates from the IMPA, and an online access to the official journal of IMPA.

The IMPA can also be followed on Facebook at Indian Medical Pharmacologists Association (IMPA; <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Indian-Medical-Pharmacologists-Association-IMPA>). Unity is our strength. Exploration is our passion. Innovation is our goal. As the president of the IMPA, I thank everyone who were very supportive in the formation this association. Also, I extend a warm invite to my fellow medical pharmacologists to join their clan.

References

1. Desai C, Kumar BD. Four and half decades of Indian Journal of Pharmacology. *Indian J Pharmacol* 2014;46:473–4.
2. Dhawan BN. Indian Pharmacological Society: a SWOT analysis. *Indian J Pharmacol* 2011;43(6):621–3.

How to cite this article: Prabhu MN. Indian Medical Pharmacologists Association: New Beginning *Int J Med Sci Public Health* 2015; 4:586-587

Source of Support: Nil, **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.