

India, US to collaborate on diabetes research

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Bangalore: Further strengthening the US-India relations in Science and technology, Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, union minister for Health and Family Welfare and Ms Kathleen Sebelius, US secretary, Health and Human Services recently signed an agreement on collaboration in diabetes research. This was during their bilateral meeting between India and the US.

The primary aim of this collaboration is to initiate a health research relationship between the two countries to generate a better understanding of the molecular and biological mechanisms underlying diabetes, to characterize the genetic, social and

environmental determinants, and to identify innovative approaches for improving prevention and treatment of diabetes. The two countries will promote and develop cooperation in the field of basic, clinical, and translational research in the areas of diabetes mellitus, on the basis of reciprocity and mutual benefit. Joint efforts will also focus on developing cost-effective tools and approaches to translate research results into policies and actions to improve the public health.

As part of this collaboration joint research programs in diabetes will be developed by the Indian Council of Medical Research and the Department of Biotechnology of the Ministry of Science and Technology, with National Institutes of Health of the Department of Health and Human Services, United States.

The main areas of cooperation will include identification of genetic and environmental etiologic factors and pathogenic mechanisms underlying development of diabetes and its complications; development of improved approaches and diagnostic tools to identify those with and at risk of diabetes and its complications; development and evaluation of innovative, sustainable intervention strategies for the prevention and/or treatment of diabetes and its associated co-morbidities; development and testing new treatment methodologies, including point of care and tele-medicine technologies, diabetes self-management approaches, and improved technologies for insulin delivery and monitoring of glycemic control; study of the impact of social, economic, cultural and environmental factors on diabetes risk and management etc. A joint steering committee (JSC) will also be formed that will communicate regularly to identify new areas of cooperation, evaluate progress, and ensure the joint program operates smoothly.

The agreement between India and the US is significantly beneficial in view of the rising burden of non communicable diseases in both countries. This is the eighth agreement between the two countries in the field of health and medicine. Diabetes is a debilitating disease that affects tens of millions of people in the US and India, and it is amongst the leading causes of death worldwide. In addition to the substantial human health costs, the estimated total financial cost for diabetes in both countries is staggering, and projected to increase substantially in coming years.