

CM CHAIRS HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS HON ‘GOA: CARES 2025’ INITIATIVE

PANAJI, MARCH 11, 2025

The Government of Goa, in collaboration with Tata Memorial Hospital and Oxford University, held a high-level meeting to advance the GOA: CARES 2025 initiative. Chief Minister, Dr Pramod Sawant chairing the meeting underscored the importance of the initiative in transforming healthcare research in Goa. He praised and commended the Directorate of Health Services for spearheading the study and emphasized the need for scientific analysis to shape evidence-based healthcare policies.

Chief Minister also expressed deep appreciation for the collaboration with Tata Memorial Centre and Oxford University, whose expertise in epidemiology and research will enhance the study’s impact. To ensure the seamless execution of the initiative, the State government has committed to dedicated budgetary support. The findings of this study will serve as a foundation for future health policies, positioning Goa as a leader in public health research at the national level.

Minister for Health, Shri Vishwajit Rane also extended full support for the initiative, reinforcing Goa’s commitment to evidence-based healthcare reforms. The GOA CARE Study will be conducted over 10 years across four sites—Valpoi, Sankhlim, Canacona and Margao—using a longitudinal prospective cohort approach.

Over nine years, 1,20,000 participants aged 25-70 from diverse socio-economic backgrounds will participate through village panchayat, local healthcare centers, and outreach programs. The study will involve baseline health screenings, blood sample collection for genetic and biomarker analysis, and regular follow-ups to track NCD incidence, lifestyle changes, and disease progression. The final year will focus on data analysis and publication, providing valuable insights for policy recommendations and preventive healthcare strategies.

During the meeting, Dr. V. Candavelou, IAS, Chief Secretary, and Health Secretary, Shri Arun Kumar Mishra, IAS, highlighted the study’s role in strengthening public healthcare policies, while Dr. Shivanand Bandekar, Dean of Goa Medical College, and Dr. Rupa Naik, Director of DHS, emphasized its significance in identifying health risk factors and improving healthcare delivery.

Special dignitary, Professor Sarah Lewington from Oxford University reaffirmed the institution’s commitment to mentoring the project, providing study advisory support, data analytics, research collaboration, and funding assistance.

Dr. Rajesh Dixit, Director of the Centre for Cancer Epidemiology at Tata Memorial Hospital, and Dr. Sharayu Mhatre, Scientific Officer at CCE, briefing attendees on the technical aspects of the study, stated that Tata Memorial Hospital will support the Goa government in study design, statistical analysis, genetic research, and data security.

Dr. Shekhar Salkar, President of NOTE India, elaborated on the study's demographic aspects, emphasizing its primary goal of creating a database on NCD prevalence and identifying modifiable lifestyle and environmental risk factors.

The meeting saw participation from key government officials and health experts, underscoring Goa's ambition to lead public health research at the national level.

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