

NATIONAL RHEUMATIC HEART SUMMIT 2018 (NRHS'18)

NRHS'18- a national conference on Rheumatic Fever (RF) and Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) held on 11th February 2018 at the Govt Medical College, Kottayam was a major event in the management of this problem. In an era ,where cardiologists speak more about statins and drug eluting stents, it was remarkable that the departments of Cardiology and Cardio- thoracic surgery at the Govt Medical College, Kottayam, along with the NGO Rheumatic Heart Club Of Kerala came together to organise this conference dealing with a social disease affecting the poor and the marginalized sections of the society. The conference also had the support of several professional bodies including the Cardiological Society of India, Association of Physicians of India, Indian Academy of Paediatrics and Indian College of Cardiology. The conference received warm felicitations from the Chief Minister of Kerala and the Health Minister of Kerala.

The academic content of the conference included in depth review of the current concepts regarding the pathogenesis, diagnostic criteria and strategies of prevention. The speakers lauded the achievement of Kerala in the prevention of Rheumatic Fever, the figure for 2016 being 0.1/1000. Speakers noted that even though ICMR data indicated a progressive decline in the prevalence of RHD from 1970 to 2010, from 5.3 to <1 per 1000 school children, these figures may represent the best achievers ,while actual figures in many parts of India would be shockingly higher.

Professor George Cherian, Former Chief of Cardiology at CMC, Vellore and a Former President of the Cardiological Society of India delivered the first Rheumatic Heart Club oration. The gathering keenly listened to this highly informative talk on the progress in the

understanding and management of Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease. Citing the example of Kuwait, where post-occupation, RF resurfaced in a previously developed country, Prof. Cherian cautioned against complacency in states like Kerala which have the best figures for RF control. Equally illuminating was a panel discussion on practical issues in the management and control of RF and RHD. In response to focused questions from the moderator, the panellists highlighted problems like availability of Penicillin, access to care, changing perceptions and the way forward. The panel requested the Govt to ensure free availability of Benzathine Penicillin, to setup Safe injection Rooms in every district hospital and to subsidize valve replacement surgery. **The panel also requested the National and State Govt. to support the Global Resolution on Rheumatic Heart Disease coming up at the World Health Assembly in May 2018.**

The major achievements of NRHS'18 included highlighting the current status of RF/RHD in India, providing practical recommendations to the Govt. of Kerala and the Govt of India regarding RF control and sensitizing the profession and the public regarding the message of World Heart Federation Roadmap for reducing cardiovascular morbidity and mortality through prevention and control of RHD. A well-compiled souvenir brought out in connection with the conference and distributed widely in India, served to reach the message to a much wider audience.