

STAKEHOLDERS MEETING ON INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH HEARING LOSS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

Report

A stakeholders meeting was organized by Society for Sound Hearing in collaboration with Department of Community Medicine, MAMC, New Delhi, India & CBM at Maulana Azad Medical College on 14th December 2015. The objective of the meeting was to review the status of inclusion of children with hearing loss in mainstream schools and the challenges faced in its implementation. The meeting also aimed to assess the initiatives and role of Sound Hearing 2030 in promoting inclusion of children with hearing loss. This exercise was also important from the point of view of implementation of policies related to education in India.

The meeting was carried out as per the following agenda:-

11:00 am- 11:15 am- Welcome by Dr Suneela Garg

11:15 am- 11:30 am- Objectives of meeting by Dr Arun Agarwal

11:30 am-11:45 am –Inaugural address by Dr A.K. Sinha, Director, AYJNIHH

11:45 am-12:00 pm- Inclusive Education: Understanding the concept & Role of Society for Sound Hearing in promotion of inclusion of children with hearing loss by Dr. Suneela Garg

12:00 pm- 12:15 pm - Barriers and challenges in mainstreaming of children with hearing loss by Ms. Shubha Chandrasekhar, Delhi Public School, Rohini

12:15 am- 12:30 pm- Role of Rehabilitation Council of India in promotion of inclusion of children with hearing loss by Mr Suman Kumar

12:30 pm- 12:45 pm- Role of Public Private Partnership in mainstreaming of children with hearing loss by Dr Nishi Gupta

12:45 pm- 01:15 pm- Role of academic institutions in promotion of inclusion of children with hearing loss by Dr J.C. Passey, Dr Diwakar Jha & Dr Tanu Anand

01:15 pm- 1:30 pm- Role of technology in mainstreaming of children with hearing loss by Ms. Shilpi Narang

01:30 pm- 02:00 pm- Role of centres of excellence in promotion of inclusion of children with hearing loss by Dr A.K. Sinha

02:00 pm – Vote of Thanks followed by Lunch

The meeting was attended by 50 participants comprising of ENT specialists, audiologists, public health experts, speech therapists, NGO representatives and special educators. Dr A.K. Sinha, Director-Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Hearing Handicapped (AYJNIHH) was the chief guest for the event.

The meeting began with Dr Suneela Garg, Director Professor of Department of Community Medicine, Maulana Azad Medical College delivering the welcome speech. She mentioned how Department of Community Medicine has played a crucial role in implementation of activities of Sound Hearing 2030 and National Programme for Prevention & Control of Deafness. Dr Arun Agarwal, Director and Chair SSHI also welcomed all the experts and explained the objectives of the stakeholders meeting.

The first presentation was delivered by Dr Suneela Garg regarding “Inclusive Education: Understanding the concept & Role of Society for Sound Hearing in promotion of inclusion of children with hearing loss”. She elaborated on the mainstreaming philosophy and the issues and challenges in mainstreaming. She also explained that Sound Hearing 2030 has developed guidelines for inclusion of children with hearing loss and has facilitated adaptation of these guidelines in different countries in South East Asia Region.

The second presentation was by Ms. Shubha Chandrashekhar on “Barriers and challenges in mainstreaming of children with hearing loss”. She highlighted that non Inclusive attitudes by schools, teachers and parents, funding issues, lack of specialists’ support, lack of barrier free environment and curriculum act as the major barriers in mainstreaming children with hearing loss. In order to overcome these barriers, communication among stakeholders, coordinated planning between general education teachers and special education staff and continuous review of existing policies is essential for inclusion to work.

Ms. Suman Kumar (Dy. Director, Rehabilitation Council of India) delivered a talk on “Role of Rehabilitation Council of India in promotion of inclusion of children with hearing loss”. During his talk, he presented the requirement of human resource for rehabilitation and programmes currently being offered by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment which facilitates inclusion. He also highlighted the shortage of human resources dedicated for hearing care.

Dr Nishi Gupta, Head of ENT, Dr Shroff’s Charity Hospital, Delhi highlighted the “Role of Public Private Partnership in mainstreaming of children with hearing loss”. She emphasised on the importance of early diagnosis of hearing loss in children and their treatment / rehabilitation. She spoke about the teleotology project “SHRUTI” being undertaken by Dr Shroff’s Charitable Hospital wherein Community based door to door screening of children population in urban slums of Delhi was carried out using mobile device. She explained that as result of the project over thirty thousand people with ear morbidities had been identified and their treatment has been carried out. She also highlighted some challenges of such screening which requires redressal like low turn-over of patient to the hospital.

Dr Diwakar Jha, Head & Dr Tanu Anand, Assistant Prof, Dept of Community Medicine, Hindu Rao Hospital, Delhi presented the talk on “Role of academic institutions in promotion of inclusion of children with hearing loss”. Dr Tanu Anand explained the fundamentals of Inclusion, She also highlighted that academic institutions have an important role to play in inclusion by means of establishment of infrastructure for early intervention, manpower

development, increasing awareness, implementation of national programme for deafness and other schemes for disabled and research and development. She emphasized that universally all children born in the medical institutions need to be screened.

Dr Passey (Head of ENT, MAMC, Delhi) presented the talk on “Role of institutions in promotion of inclusion of children with hearing loss”. He elaborated on the role of various institutions like Rehabilitation Council of India, All India Institute of Speech and Hearing, Mysore, Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for the Hearing Handicapped, Mumbai, National Institute of Rehabilitation Training and Research, Cuttack and Medical Colleges in promotion of inclusion of children with hearing loss. He also spoke about the various government programmes like National Programme for Prevention and Control of Deafness, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram and the role of medical colleges in their implementation.

Ms. Shilpi Narang delivered a talk on “Role of technology in mainstreaming of children with hearing loss”. She mentioned how technology has benefited the children with hearing loss and how with technology including hearing aids, cochlear implants, FM systems and assistive devices has facilitated mainstreaming. She presented success stories of cochlear implanted children to support the same. She also showed a video depicting inclusion.

The key note talk was delivered by Dr Sinha on “Role of centres of excellence in promotion of inclusion of children with hearing loss”. Dr Sinha elaborated on the initiatives taken by Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Hearing Handicapped (AYJNIHH) such as undertaking hearing screening (ABR/ASSR/OAE/IA/PTA) and web based hearing screening initiatives. He also mentioned that AYJNIHH is the Nodal Agency for implementation of ADIP scheme as part of which for cochlear implantation is being undertaken under the scheme. He also mentioned that for inclusion, schools should have resource room, FM system, use of sign language and parents’ participation. Lastly he mentioned that Department of Empowerment of persons with Disability, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment would soon be issuing Universal ID Numbers to all persons with disability which would contain details of their academic achievement, enrolment and progression. He concluded by saying that Inclusion should be a meaningful exercise.

The stakeholders’ meeting was extremely fruitful with contribution from all the experts present. The meeting ended with vote of thanks by Ms. Deeksha Khurana to all the experts and attendees present.

Future Action

- A representative from Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Hearing Handicapped (AYJNIHH), Delhi campus mentioned that the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has made it mandatory for all its affiliated schools to appoint a special educator to promote inclusive education. However no deadline has been fixed for completion of this appointment. Also he mentioned that the schools where these teachers have been appointed, the salary structure is not at par with other teachers resulting in loss of confidence among these educators. Also in certain schools these educators are made to do jobs which are not in the purview of their responsibilities. Also there is no mechanism in place for monitoring the effectiveness of these educators. In this regard he proposed that if a document could be prepared on this and submitted to Ministry of Human Resource Development, it would be fruitful.
- During the discussion, Dr Suneela Garg also mentioned that schools bearing the name “Deaf and dumb” should be renamed differently so that stigma attached to it could be reduced. In this regard, Dr Agarwal suggested that Society for Sound Hearing should take up the task of preparing this document for submission to Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Hearing Handicapped (AYJNIHH).
- Dr A.K. Sinha mentioned that since the word “Handicapped” is associated with stigma, even at Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Hearing Handicapped (AYJNIHH), the procedure has been initiated to change the name of the institute.
- Several other comments came up such as salary of audiologist is quite less which is resulting in low intake of this course. At the same time lots of position for audiologists are lying vacant. In this regard a representation should be made to the ministry.
- Representative from Amar Jyoti invited all the participants to visit them so as to see how actually the inclusion is occurring for visually impaired.

Glimpses of the meeting



