

## PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

### 49th National Conference, Indian Academy of Pediatrics, Gurgaon, January 19, 2012

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*National IAP President, 2012*

**H**onorable Chief guest, Guest of honor, Presidents of Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP), dignitaries on and off the dais, distinguished guest faculty, government officials, media personnel, ladies and gentleman, and beloved friends: Namaskar, Susandhya, Good Evening to you all with lots of greetings and loads of wishes for a very happy and joyous year ahead.

Friends, I am indeed privileged, honored, rather destined to serve the children of this country through IAP and this has become possible only because of you, who have elected me to this most coveted post of the President of IAP. I, most humbly and gratefully thank you all for the love and affection showered upon me and confidence and faith reposed in me. I pledge, I will strive hard and hard to keep your faith alive. People call it "Passion" – Yes, I am passionate, rather spiritual for the cause of IAP, which has always been no mean than "Mother Teacher" to me and I love my mother and respect my teacher. Having said so, in testimony let me assure you that I shall work relentlessly, fearlessly, unprejudiced, without malice to anybody, without coercion and inducement with fullest honesty, integrity, conviction and vision for the cause of IAP and the children of this country.

If we go in rewind mode and nostalgic by lanes, IAP has grown in leaps and bounds from a conglomeration of two groups from Bombay and Calcutta with merely 123 members in 1963 to over 20000 in 2012 to become second largest organization of pediatricians in the world, next only to American Academy of Pediatrics. It is indeed an apex and supreme body of the fraternity of pediatricians in the country which is constantly engaged in advocacy, advisory, educative, research, charity and ultimately child survival strategies. I am indeed proud to be an IAPian.

Friends, it is said- 'India is Incredible', 'India is Shining', 'Economy is blooming', India is becoming 'World Power', but on the other hand, on health front, India also boasts to be top-most in child mortality in the

world. Out of 9 million deaths among under-five children, 20%, i.e., around 2 million children die in India every year, mainly due to neonatal sepsis, neonatal asphyxia, vaccine preventable disease including pneumonia, diarrhea and measles, and severe malnutrition.

Indeed as very truly said by our Hon'ble Prime Minister recently it is a matter of shame that 46 percent of children are malnourished in our country. It is irony that around 42% of under-five mortality is accounted for in neonatal period i.e., around 900,000 newborns do not survive beyond 4 weeks of life, of which around 500,000 do not survive beyond 1 week of life. This is the country where polio is still a not out player. Infant mortality rate is still above 50. Routine immunization status is pathetic and stands around 55–60% with 20–25% immunization in BIMARU states which fall in the red zone. India contributes about 40% of 24 million unimmunized children globally. Less than half of infants below 6 months are exclusively breastfed and only 27–30% children with diarrhea receive oral rehydration salt (ORS) solution. Who is responsible for it? It is not only resource crunched government but myopic vision, poverty of planning and implementation of health policies, and poor attitude and knowledge of health care workers. Since IAP is a custodian and crusader for the health of the children – it also is a party to it, I guess so!

As the President of IAP, my Vision 2012 would be focused on four vital issues.

- (a) To push India towards achieving MDG-4 by 2015 i.e., reduction in child mortality by two-third;
- (b) Reaching the unreached pediatrician through academics with a thrust on office practice;
- (c) To groom medical students in Pediatrics because today's student is tomorrow's pediatrician; and
- (d) To strengthen IAP financially and at the level of government, national and international NGOs like UNICEF, WHO, Bill Gates Foundation, IPA, AAP, APPA, RCPCH, NPSP, NACCO, BPS, etc.

Though IAP is not a statutory body, I will try my level best to improve its ties with the government so that it becomes a mandatory partner to all the child health policies and advocacies. Come, let us together make IAP an “*Epitome of Prowess!!*” To accomplish these visions, I have envisaged few programs under the auspices of “IAPs Presidential Action Plan 2012, a blend of some new and some old”. Can we now have a look at a small presentation on the same?

Come PEDICON and it's a festive season for IAP; but I call it ultimate scientific pilgrimage for every IAPian. This conference is dedicated to the girl child. The least we can offer her is “Nurture with Care”. Hundreds and thousands of unborn girl child do not see the rays of life, thanks to rampant female feticide, particularly in this part of the land. This mega event is being meticulously organized and brilliantly executed by a dedicated team under the dynamic leadership of Dr. “Maha-Veer” and Dr Ramesh Goyal. I compliment, congratulate and salute them for their untiring efforts to host this excellent conference. There is a paradigm shift in the scientific agenda. I am sure, you will appreciate more and more interactive sessions, ask the experts, case scenarios, debates and keypad sessions. For the first time, a CME is being specially crafted for postgraduates and also one for them who wish to be entrepreneurs in future. Dr. Premalata Krishnan has cooked an academic recipe for your grey cells, blended with different spices and enriched with vitamins and minerals from US and UK. Hospitality is warm enough befitting to the Haryanvi ethos and culture. Friends, IAP is entering into the golden year and I wish that this conference should become a gold standard.

This illustrious organization of 20,000 pediatricians with 300+ branches, 23 sub-specialty chapters and groups and two indexed journals of international class is undoubtedly ranked topmost amongst all other medical societies. Unfortunately, this most prestigious organization has been facing some turbulence in its abode in the recent past in the form of tribunals, litigations, and by some to destabilize it, the worst being public interest litigation (PIL) against inclusion of pentavalent vaccine in national immunization program, thereby depriving the poor and unprivileged children of this valuable vaccine. I

can only pray good sense prevail upon them.

I take this opportunity to thank my predecessors under whom I had privilege to work like Drs Raju Shah, Nitin Shah, Naveen Thacker, RK Agarwal, Panna Choudhury, Deepak Ugra and TU Sukumaran who have groomed me into a presidential candidate. My special thanks to Dr TU Sukumaran for his great cooperation and guidance. Sir, I will try to walk on your footprints. My hearty congratulations to the newly elected president elect, Dr CP Bansal, whom I know as a man of vision and wisdom. Sir, I shall solicit your fullest cooperation, support and guidance in all my endeavors. I am lucky to be blessed with a very dashing, and workaholic Secretary General in Dr Sailesh Gupta and a matured treasurer in Dr Pravin Mehta and very efficient office staff, particularly Mr. Joseph Gonsalves and Ajay Surve having a supersonic speed of compliance. The editors-in-chief, Dr Piyush Gupta, Dr Nendunchelian and Dr Jesson Unni are other jewels in the crown of IAP. My heart-felt thanks to the honorable executive board (EB) members of 2011 for their invaluable inputs throughout the year and congratulations to the newly elected EB members of 2012, with the expectation of their fullest cooperation, support, and guidance in the execution of my action plans. My congratulations to all the FIAP awardees, best chapter awardees, best branch awardees and various weeks' celebration awardees for their monumental contribution towards IAP and the children of this country.

Lastly, my holistic duty is to extend my heartfelt gratitudes to the blessings of the almighty, blessings of my late parents, blessings of my elder brother, sacrifices of my wife Rita, and wholehearted support of my children, Praveen, Dr Shikha and Dr Alok without which I would not have achieved this position in IAP. Friends, I have dedicated this presidential address of mine to “*The sufferings of those tiny-tots on whom we learn the art and science of Pediatrics.*”

I will conclude by praying to the Almighty God to bestow its choicest blessings upon the entire pediatric fraternity of the IAP, the children of this country, and upon this conference so that it becomes immortal to be cherished forever. Thank you and enjoy a nice and lovely evening ahead.

*Jai Ho IAP!!!*