

You are the Real IAP

My thanks and admiration for esteemed members of Indian Academy of Pediatrics to provide me this platform to communicate with you all. I am well aware of the duties and responsibilities attached with this coveted post as I assume the office of President for the year 2008 with utmost humility and commitment.

Down my memory lane since mid-seventies (when I became a member) with about 700 members, we are now a strong force of 16,000 plus members with an earnest desire to undertake and deliver some thing positive and manifest in the field of *child welfare* in totality. We know that IAP is now a culture, a movement and a way of social accountability.

Rightly said, our academy now needs to reach masses and it is only possible when we are at the door-steps of our smaller branches. Of late, there has been a big change in conceiving, designing and executing the programs related to child health in IAP. However, it is the grass-root member who remains the backbone and pivotal force to ensure success of these activities. IAP members thus need to be active partners. Additionally, there are around ten thousand pediatricians all over the country who are not members our academy. My vision in 2008 is to reach the unreached; *i.e.*, involve those who keep out and activate those who are inert. To make ourselves more focused, all the states need to have one branch in each district.

Reaching the unreached is a catchy slogan but how much 'Outreach Services' are undertaken by us is a matter of grey area. The time has come for more dedication and devotion in our services in far flung areas. After six decades of independence, we have not been able to achieve much in the field of child health compared to other smaller developing countries. Our health services are under pressure and despite spending so much, the government report card is dismal. Although we can boast of eradicating smallpox, yet basic health indices in few states tell the bare truth.

As per the report of National Family Health Survey-3, we have failed to achieve the desired results. The children in rural, tribal and urban slums are not getting the same attention and care as their counterparts in big towns. Coupled with poverty, ignorance and accessibility, things are moving from bad to worse. We know that simple interventions are very effective in public health and especially in newborn and childcare. The real success story will only be written when health indices of Indian children become at par with developed countries.

Most of the health activities are in urban places while rural areas and slums are ignored. The execution of many overlapping health schemes of the government is poor. The health system/policies need to be revamped, not so much in concept but more so in implementation. We have enough academics; the need of the hour is the effective strategy and work for it. For that we have to change our mindset to give priority to needy and poor masses. It is a fact, the disease poor get receive least attention from policy makers. The pharmaceutical industry does not invest in those diseases which affect poor.

Indian Academy of Pediatrics is very viable, versatile and effective group of Pediatricians in India. We have clear aims, objectives, academics and mission statement. Call by any name, it is child welfare from day one to eighteen years for IAP always. Future belongs to those who challenge established notions, who think ahead. And here comes the vital role of common member in improving 'basic' or 'primary' child care. **We can't spell IAP without you.** You are the real strength of IAP.

Our esteemed Academy commands great respect in the eyes of government, NGO's, and international agencies. Wherever you go and whatsoever the occasion is, people talk very high of IAP. We are functional, we are productive and we are accountable as custodians of health of our Indian children. The entire credit goes to all its members in real sense. This has not been possible in one day. Our seniors

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were very visionary to conceive the ideas and the followers were enthusiastic and energetic enough to keep the pace of academics, clarity and accountability. AND with the result, we are a prestigious organization today.

Not ahead, not behind; I just wish to walk with you, hand in hand, like a human chain in a circle, where no one is cornered. Together, we shall work for every child of our great country with the enthusiasm of a child in each of us. I want the child in you to come out and command its simplicity, affection and work accomplishment.

I know, the best time to plant a tree was yesterday but next best time to plant is TODAY and we have to take an oath of caring these 'have-nots' with extra care and charity.

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