

## **Event Report**

The Faculty of Dentistry, JMI organized a national-level seminar titled “Oral health inequalities in India: learning from the past and paving the way for the future” on Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> February from 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM in Library Hall, Faculty of Dentistry, Jamia Millia Islamia. This seminar was conducted with the help of financial grant provided by Indian Council of Social Sciences Research (ICSSR) to Prof. Abhishek Mehta, Department of Public Health Dentistry. The Inauguration ceremony of the event was presided over by Dean, faculty of Dentistry, Prof. (Dr). Keya Sircar and the Guest of Honour for the event was Professor G M Sogi, Principal, MM Dental College, Ambala (Haryana)

A plethora of National and International public health professionals were invited to deliver guest lectures. The program started with first Guest lecture by Dr Harsh Priya from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi. She updated the audience with initiatives taken by Government of India under National Oral Health Program with aim to reduce the burden of oral diseases Indian population. National Oral Health Programme was initiated in 2006 by GOI to provide integrated, comprehensive oral health care in the existing health care facilities.

The second lecture was delivered by Prof. Chandrashekher Janakiram, Head of the Department, Public Health Dentistry, School of Dentistry, Amrita University, Kochi (Kerala) . He helped the audience understand what is meant by Oral health inequalities. He explained that socio-economic inequalities and social gradients exist in oral health in most countries. for example, the associations between socio-economic (SES) characteristics and dental caries in adults, showed that the evidence for social gradients was consistent across various indicators, including level of education, income, occupation, social class and measures of area-level socio-economic status.

The third lecture was by Professor Manu Mathur, Head of Department Dental Public Health, Queen Mary University (UK) was focused on global priorities for reducing oral health inequalities. He explained that Oral diseases are the most prevalent disease to mankind. These diseases are a major public health challenge for our and future generations. Oral disorders disproportionately affect the poor, disadvantaged, and marginalised populations leading to oral health inequalities in a population. The LMIC countries like India have a very high, increasing burden of oral diseases. India with high urban poor and rural population will

have a high inequality in oral health in the population. Unfortunately, this public health issue is rarely discussed in our country nor is part of our undergraduate or postgraduate curriculum.

The fourth session was delivered in online mode by Prof. Richard Watt, Dental Public Health, Dept. of Epidemiology and Public Health, University College of London, UK. Prof. Watt focused on contemporary research priorities for reducing oral health inequalities. He said current oral health systems have largely failed to combat the global challenge of oral diseases, nor address the unjust and stark inequalities that exist. In many LMICs the failings of the oral care system are most acute with dental services underdeveloped and unaffordable to the majority of the population but particularly the rural poor and those living in urban 'slums'.

The last session of the event was delivered by Dr Mirai Chatterjee, Director, Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Social Security. She explained the need for engaging communities into research work and importance of community mapping. She highlighted the work of our organization i.e. SEWA in uplifting communities especially women working in a informal sector.

More than 75 dental professionals from 17 dental colleges participated in this seminar. An e-poster competition was also organized as part of this seminar. Total 20 entries were received for this competition. Best three posters in each category -undergraduate and postgraduate were judged by senior faculty members from the speciality. Winners were provided a certificate and a gift. The event was a success and was well appreciated by the delegates. This seminar serves as a valuable resource for those committed to addressing oral health inequalities in India and highlighted this public health issue by conducting lectures focusing on understanding the pattern, mechanisms, and consequences of oral health inequalities.