

GSK, RCB to develop new scientific doctoral programmes

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A joint initiative between GSK Pharmaceuticals Ltd. and Regional Centre for Biotechnology (RCB)



The Regional Centre for Biotechnology (RCB), an academic institution of national importance established by the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, under the auspices of UNESCO, and GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals Ltd. (GSK Pharmaceutical Ltd.) have launched the Trust in Science Programme to develop doctoral programs (PhDs) in the fields of biostatistics and bioinformatics. The launch took place in the presence of **Dr. Renu Swarup**, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, **Honourable Sir Dominic Asquith KCMG**, British High Commissioner to India, **Prof. Sudhanshu Vrat**, Executive Director, RCB, and **Mr. A Vaidheesh**, Vice President, & MD, GSK Pharmaceutical Ltd.

Dr. Renu Swarup, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology said, “We would like to create more opportunities in India for post graduate doctoral education in science. The GSK – RCB collaboration allows us to do just that, specifically in two niche, high-valued fields: biostatistics and bioinformatics. The goal is to provide students with a specialized course that addresses current industry needs and opportunities. This, we believe, will help them better contribute to India’s biopharma and medical research needs.”

Under this initiative, the RCB will develop program content, manage logistics and oversee the running of the full-time programs. GSK Pharmaceutical Ltd. will provide funding and ensure all course content is shaped to address current industry needs and opportunities. Students with a master’s degree in biostatistics, maths, and bioinformatics are eligible for the PhD courses.

Honourable Sir Dominic Asquith KCMG said, “When it comes to medicine and healthcare, quality partnerships are already helping our nations move forward. Beyond government to government collaboration, partnerships between the private and the public sectors hold great potential for mutually beneficial breakthroughs, such as the one between RCB and GSK Pharmaceutical Ltd. I see this partnership as the next step in our ongoing story of innovation and partnership, which will also

boost India's growing strength in pharmaceuticals."

With recent increase in health and pharmaceutical research, there is urgent need for trained biostatisticians and bioinformaticians in India. Many young Indians want to pursue specialized bioinformatics and biostatistics courses, but do not find suitable options in the country. Moreover, current courses are not updated.

Prof. Sudhanshu Vrat said, *"The interdisciplinary degree programs in Biostatistics and Bioinformatics are designed to promote academia-industry interaction where the doctoral students form the bridge between the two. Through these programs we hope to produce high-quality human resource capable of driving innovation in biopharma research."*

Mr. A Vaidheesh said, *"While students are being trained at the graduate and post-graduate level, we recognize that there is a gap between the theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom and the practical hands-on understanding of how to apply these principles to real data. There is a need to widen India's scientific community's expertise in these subjects. One way to do this is to start young, and that is the primary goal of this MoU. We plan to work with budding scientists in the early stages of their research career and arm them with the necessary skill sets to navigate through big data and informatics successfully. We will also ensure that students who complete the course are better prepared for a career in the pharmaceutical industry."*

GSK Pharmaceutical Ltd.'s "Trust in Science" initiative is a novel public-private partnership model to build R&D capacity for development and discovery in science. The pillars of this initiative are: scientific excellence, trust and talent development in line with GSK's Science, Technology and Culture values. The initiative was launched in 2011 initially to engage with leading researchers and institutions in Latin America, focused on Brazil and Argentina. GSK Pharmaceutical Ltd. is pleased to expand this initiative beyond Latin America to other emerging markets such as India.