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FABA holds 21-day virtual workshop on drug discovery and development

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In collaboration with the Science Gurus and the University of Hyderabad



The Federation of Asian Biotech Associations (FABA) in collaboration with the Science Gurus and the University of Hyderabad conducted a 21-day virtual workshop on drug discovery and development from the 15th of March to the 4th of April 2021.

The workshop was sponsored by NATCO Pharma, co-sponsored by Jackson Laboratories and the awards were sponsored by Cytiva Life Sciences. Nearly sixty-eight participants from various universities and industries of the country and abroad registered for the workshop.

The Inaugural address on the 15th of March was initiated with welcome address by Prof. P. Reddanna, Executive President, FABA and Dr. Asadulghani, President, FABA followed by the inaugural address by Anuradha Acharya (Mapmygenome) who spoke about the advances in personalized medicine and Dr. Jagath Reddy Junutula, Board Chairman, Science Gurus who introduced the participants to the main features and schedule of the workshop and a final vote of thanks by Dr. Bindu Madhava Reddy from the University of Hyderabad.

The topics and sessions were designed so as to equip the participants with the required knowledge of how drugs for various diseases are first discovered then extensively tested characterized, clinically developed tested and approved by regulators before industrially manufacturing for the public use.

Sessions were held on Targeted drug therapies, Personalized medicine, Gene Therapy, the advances in CADD, AI and Bioinformatics for the purpose of discovering drug targets and designing drugs, Animal models for drug testing, Industrial manufacturing and large-scale production of drugs, legalities of drug manufacturing, IPR and Regulatory issues, and Capital, Funding required for Pharma and Drug Startups.

Prominent speakers in these sessions included, Dr. Rami Reddy Mutyala (RR Labs), Dr. Arun Shastry (Hanugen), Dr. Chakk Ramesha (Medhus Bio), Dr. Shridhar Narayanan (FNDR), Dr. Uday Saxena (ReaGene Innovations), Dr Eswara Reddy (DGCI) and Dr. Mohan Vemuri (Thermo Fisher Scientific).

In addition to the speaker sessions the participants gave a 15 mins presentation on relevant disease and drug development topics such as Alzheimer's, B-cell lymphoma, hepatitis, and the best presenters were awarded at the end of the work shop. Senior industrial representatives from Syngene, NATCO Pharma and Aragen Life Sciences enthusiastically took part in the workshop-related activities and presentations.

The sessions and presentations for the workshop concluded on the 4th of April 2021. The closing ceremony began with Dr. P Ratnakar and Dr. Surya Sankuratri who introduced FABA and the Science Gurus respectively to the audience. The keynote speaker Dr. Anula Jayasuriya engaged the invited guests, participants and organizing members with her talk on capital funding.

The highlight of the closing ceremony included a panel discussion on "Pharma and Biopharma Industries in India: Challenges and Opportunities in Innovative Drug Discovery and Development", involving the panelists from the academy, industry and the Government agencies and moderated by Dr. Uday Saxena, ReaGene Innovations.

The panel discussion highlighted key challenges such as the lack of interactions between the basic scientists and clinicians, lack of academic – industry interactions, risk averse nature of the Indian Pharma and Biopharma industries, and lack of an effective venture funding ecosystem here. It is opined that the startup ecosystem, supported by the Government agencies such as BIRAC, has played key role in promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in the country but to take it to the next level the country needs a robust venture financial ecosystem and the drive of the Indian industry taking a risk for innovative drug discoveries to the next stage.