

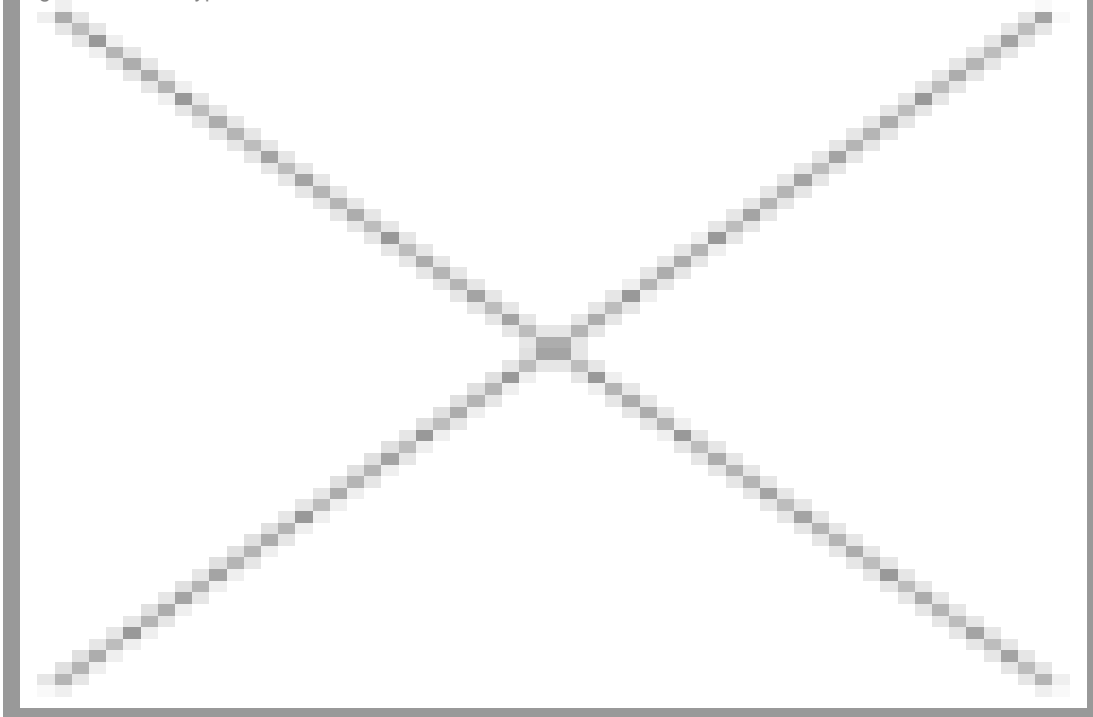
EmTech India 2011 speakers give insights into vaccine R&D

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Speakers at EmTech India 2011 spoke about the innovations that are being undertaken by their organizations and how these could be applied to business and strategy.

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(L-R): Dr Sanjay Kakkar, trustee, Thrombosis Research Institute, Bangalore; Dr Chetan Chitnis, principal leader – Malaria Group, ICGEB, New Delhi; Prof D Balasubramanian, director of research, LV Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad; Mr Udaykumar Ranga, professor, JNCASR, Bangalore; and Mr Jeffrey M Karp, assistant professor in Medicine at Harvard Medical School, US, took part in a panel discussion on 'Activating the Innovation Gene' held as part of EmTech 2011 in Bangalore, India, on March 22, 2011.

The EmTech India 2011 conference in its third edition in India saw several eminent personalities shed light on the emerging trends and the future of technology. The event, which is conducted every year by MIT's Technology Review's India edition by CyberMedia, Asia's leading technology publisher, was held during 22-23 March in Bangalore.

The plenary session on day one of the event saw several speakers discuss the imperatives in the field of vaccine research. The speakers included Dr Chetan Chitnis, principal leader, Malaria Group, International Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), Delhi; Professor Udaykumar Ranga, Professor, JNCASR, Bangalore; Dr Sanjay Kakkar, Trustee, Thrombosis Research Institute, Bangalore and Dr Jeffrey M. Karp, HST Affiliate Faculty, Assistant Professor in Medicine at Harvard Medical School and Co-Director, Regenerative Therapeutics Center, Brigham & Women's Hospital. The session was moderated by Dr D Balasubramanian, director of research, LV Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad.

Dr Chitnis, while sharing his thoughts on the kind of innovation happening on developing vaccine against malaria, said, "We are developing a vaccine for *P. vivax* malaria based on PvRII. Methods to produce recombinant PvRII have been developed and efforts to identify an optimal adjuvant formulation are underway. Clinical grade *P. falciparum* vaccine candidate JAIVAC-1 has been manufactured under cGMP by an Indian biotechnology company, Bharat Biotech, Hyderabad." Government of India's Million Death Study revealed that about 205,000 Indians under age 70 die annually due to Malaria. On the other hand, World Health Organization (WHO) reports put the figure at 15,000.

Also, the Indian population is at high risk of heart attacks when compared with the population in the West because of many factors including, life style changes and smoking among others. Considering the increase in the number of people that are being diagnosed with cardiovascular diseases, Bangalore based Thrombosis Research Institute, has developed a DNA based saliva test to check the risk of heart disease.

Speaking at the panel discussion, Dr Kakkar said, 'The genetic test has been designed specifically for the indigenous population, using the Western technology. After verification and known risks, preventive measures for weight, adequate exercise and proper diet to reduce the risk of such losses can be started.'

Professor Ranga, while speaking on developments made by the team at the Molecular Biology and Genetics Unit, on developing HIV vaccine said, "India can look at utilizing the expertise gained in traditional medicine such as ayurveda, unani, siddha medicines over thousands of years, in developing poly herbal medicine for HIV. "

Meanwhile, Dr Karp, pointed out that commercialization will always drive innovation.