

Press Note

Biocon Foundation Wins the Prestigious ‘IHW Gold Award for Diseases Screening Initiative of the Year’ for 2022

Bengaluru, Karnataka, India, January 24, 2023

Biocon Foundation, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arm of **Biocon Limited**, has been awarded the **Gold Award** in the ‘**Diseases Screening Initiative of the Year**’ category for its ‘**Oral Cancer Screening Program**’ by the **India Health and Wellness (IHW) Council** at the annual IHW Summit & Awards event, held in Mumbai.

Biocon Foundation’s Mission Director Dr Anupama Shetty received the award at the 8th edition of the IHW Summit & Awards, which was co-hosted by the Public Health & Family Welfare Department, Government of Maharashtra and supported by NITI Aayog.

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Executive Chairperson, Biocon and Managing Trustee, Biocon Foundation, said, *“The IHW Council’s ‘Gold Award for Diseases Screening Initiative of the Year’ is a great recognition of the impact Biocon Foundation has made in the early detection and management of oral cancer in the country through its cost-effective, innovative and technology-based screening program. Downstaging oral cancer through early detection is key to alleviate the burden of disease and oral cancer has been a major public health issue in India for several decades. The Foundation’s efforts are leading to improved survival, decreased morbidity and low out-of-pocket expenditure for patients.”*

On receiving the award, **Dr Anupama Shetty, Mission Director, Biocon Foundation**, said, *“We are extremely happy to receive the IHW Council’s Gold Award for our Oral Cancer Screening Program, which adopts a unique approach for robust surveillance and monitoring of high-risk groups in population-based and opportunistic screenings. Our mobile health (mHealth) module offers a simple interface that lends itself to effective data capture by health providers at all levels. The initiative has resulted in more than 70,000 screenings in different parts of India, and ~13% of positive detections for Oral Potentially Malignant Disorders (OPMDs) have been reported.”*

Biocon Foundation has pioneered a mHealth-technology-based (mobile health) oral cancer screening program in India with the aim of addressing and downstaging cancer of the lip and oral cavity, which is the most common cancer among males and the fourth most common cancer among females in India. It accounts for around 30% of all cancers in India, according to GLOBOCAN 2020.

The Foundation’s program improves the ability of Frontline Healthcare Providers (FHPs) to prevent and diagnose oral cancer at an early stage in low-resource settings. The capacity building of FHPs in the use of a mobile phone-based app empowers them to capture health data, including intra-oral images. It also connects FHPs to remote specialists for diagnosis. This unique approach enables robust patient triaging and surveillance to monitor high-risk groups.

Since its inception in 2011, the program has been rolled out in various high disease burden areas in Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi, Punjab, Nagaland and Assam. The Foundation has trained more than **1,000 medical, paramedical and healthcare workers** in using the mHealth technology for oral cancer screening. The program has also led to research publications on the role of community health workers in early detection, use of mHealth and point-of-care technologies, consensus guidelines for the management of head and neck cancers and OPMDs in leading, peer-reviewed journals such as the *Scientific Reports - Nature*, *Indian Journal of Cancer* and others.

Biocon Foundation has also forged meaningful partnerships with state governments, tertiary health centres and academic institutions for research and delivery of quality health services at scale. Its partnerships with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru and the International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Hyderabad have led to the development of an AI-based algorithm for the binary classification of cancerous and pre-cancerous lesions. Furthermore, an Oral Cancer Task Force comprising leading experts has been constituted with the aim of finding best practices to downstage oral cancer in India.

About India Health & Wellness Summit & Awards:

The India Health & Wellness Summit & Awards brings together all relevant stakeholders to devise comprehensive and organized strategies aligning with the core objective of achieving good health for all. The event is attended by government authorities, healthcare industry players, international and national organizations, non-profit organizations, community leaders, innovators, technology providers and influencers. The aim of the event is to address the critical issues of physical & mental health and provide strategic and technology-driven solutions. It also includes discussions on the future impact of health and socio-economy, required action at the grassroots level to address challenges such as food safety & security, as well as climate action. India Health & Wellness Awards honors all significant contributions towards ensuring good health for all through path-breaking innovations and partnerships.

About Biocon Foundation:

Biocon Foundation, the Corporate Social Responsibility arm of Biocon, Biocon Biologics and Syngene International, has been working to empower marginalized communities since 2005. Biocon Foundation partners with the society to promote social and economic inclusion. It has thus made significant investments in enhancing access to quality healthcare, education and civic infrastructure along with environmental sustainability projects. Combined with field initiatives, these programs create a momentum to elevate the marginalized sections of the society. Over the years, Biocon Foundation has built a strong reputation for the quality of its programs and their impact in addressing the social, humanitarian, and environmental challenges facing India. To make a more meaningful impact, the Foundation regularly partners with government agencies and like-minded organizations for program delivery. Besides addressing critical national and state level challenges in primary healthcare, education and rural development, the Foundation is also augmenting environmental sustainability through the lake revival mission in Bengaluru. Visit: <http://www.bioconfoundation.org>

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