

## PRESS RELEASE

# Biocon Foundation and IISc organize OCTF Conference on Artificial Intelligence in Oral Cancer

*Biocon Foundation is the lead expert for phase 1 of the project the AI-Center of Excellence*

**Bengaluru, INDIA, July 30, 2024:**

**Biocon Foundation**, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arm of the **Biocon Group**, in association with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), organized the fifth edition of the **Oral Cancer Task Force (OCTF) Conference** on 26–27 July 2024. The two-day conference on '**Artificial Intelligence in Oral Cancer**,' was held at the IISc campus, commemorating the World Head & Neck Cancer Day.

The conference brought together clinicians and scientists to discuss progress in oral cancer screening for early detection. Esteemed opinion leaders such as **Dr GK Rath**, Member, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board; **Dr Vijay Chandru**, Strand Life Sciences; **Dr Praveen Birur**, Vice Principal - KLESIDS & Lead - Oral Cancer Program Biocon Foundation; **Dr K Govind Babu**, Medical Oncologist, HCG Cancer Centre; **Prof Rajesh Sundaresan**, Principal Investigator - AI-CoE, **Prof. Debnath Pal**, Principal Investigator - MIDAS project, and **Dr Anupama Shetty**, Mission Director, Biocon Foundation, graced the conference and added significant value through their collective expertise and insights. **Dr Kumar Prabhash**, Medical Oncologist, Tata Memorial Hospital and **Dr Moni Abraham Kuriakose**, Co-Founder, MD & CEO, Karkinos Healthcare also attended the conference virtually.

Expressing her honor to host the fifth edition of the Oral Cancer Task Force Conference at the Indian Institute of Science **Dr Anupama Shetty, Mission Director, Biocon Foundation, said, “The annual Oral Cancer Task Force conference is a powerful platform for united action. This year, we were honored to host the 5th edition of the OCTF Conference at the Indian Institute of Science, centered around the theme 'Artificial Intelligence in Oral Cancer'. Leading experts and researchers from organizations such as AIIMS Cachar Cancer Center and MPMMCC (Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya Cancer Centre) shared advancements and best practices in preventing, diagnosing, and treating oral cancer. The publication of consensus guidelines for head and neck cancer, specific to the Indian subcontinent’s demographic and economic conditions, remains the annual highlight of the conference. Together, we are building a stronger, more resilient network dedicated to downstaging oral cancer in India.”**

**AI-Center of Excellence**

The Biocon Foundation has partnered with IISc to undertake the AI-Center of Excellence in Oral Cancer Projects. It is a multicentric study involving collaboration with 28 consortium partners, with IISc as the nodal center. Biocon Foundation is the lead expert for phase 1 of the project. The project aims to develop an algorithm for an oral cancer screening tool – *Aarogya Aarohan*. This project emphasizes the role of AI in healthcare. The goal is to create an AI-assisted mobile phone-based white light imaging system to classify oral lesions as high-risk or low-risk for oral cancer. The expected outcomes include the development of an open-source, class B certified oral cancer screening tool with acceptable sensitivity and specificity for potential deployment in Health and Wellness Centers. This project also aims to empower healthcare workers to deliver quality care and develop compressed models that run on low-cost smartphones, enabling scalable point-of-care screening in low-resource settings, even in places with low connectivity, while being multimodal in tertiary care centres.

Biocon Foundation has been running its flagship oral cancer screening program for almost a decade now. The program - Oral Cancer Control Program (OCCP) - focuses on early detection of oral cancer for the underserved communities. Since its inception, the program has covered over 85,000 individuals across India of which 13% have been identified as being positive for Oral Potentially Malignant Disorders (OPMDs).

**Prof. Debnath Pal, Computational Biologist, Indian Institute of Science**, and one of the lead investigators in the AI in Oral Cancer initiative said, *“AI can catalyze an enabling ecosystem for addressing different challenges in healthcare and medicine when pursued systematically starting from good quality data, creative algorithms and well-designed trials. Researchers and clinicians can complement each other in this endeavor to mutually benefit and raise the quality of not only science but the quality of care available to the patients as well. At IISc, we hope to achieve these twin goals through our work.”*

**Prof. Rajesh Sundaresan, Dean, Division of EECS, IISc** said, *“It is highly appropriate that the AI-CoE effort is working towards enabling healthcare professionals tackle one of the most common diseases of public concern in India. Our efforts, we hope, will help bring down the burden by leveraging technology. The two-day event fostered greater collaboration across disciplines and strengthened the AI-CoE initiative.”*

**Dr GK Rath, Member, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board** said, *“Integration of technology has always led to great advances in the medical field. AI is a tool which we need to deploy to our advantage. In view of high burden of oral cancer, I am pleased to be a part of OCTF conference, which aims to deliberate on developing AI enabled point of care diagnosis for oral cancer and in releasing the annual consensus guidelines in management of oral cancer.”*

**Medical-Imaging and Information Datasets for India**

The Medical-Imaging and Information Datasets for India (MIDAS) is a national initiative led by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and ARTPARK-IISc. The goal of MIDAS is to create a comprehensive medical imaging and other modality datasets that accurately represents India's diverse population. This initiative aims to initially focus on improving the accessibility and effectiveness of medical imaging for screening and diagnostics, to assist healthcare professionals. MIDAS will operate as a technology-enabled hub and spoke system, facilitating the growth of high-quality medical datasets and fostering research and innovation in the health sector across India. The project involves collaboration across various institutions to collect and manage data, ensuring adherence to gold-standard guidelines for data quality and patient privacy. By providing a central platform to access this data, MIDAS will support AI model training for disease diagnosis and contribute significantly to the development of robust AI tools for public health, enhancing research and facilitate more effective evaluation of medical AI applications.

**Dr Kumar Prabhash, Medical Oncologist, Tata Memorial Hospital** said, *“AI has made significant strides in various aspects of oral cancer research and treatment. AI CoE is focused on early detection of oral cancer from imaging data, predictive analytics for treatment outcomes, and personalized medicine through genetic analysis. Thus having a potential in improving diagnostic accuracy and workflow efficiency for clinicians. Today's platform showcases the latest AI advancements and foster collaborations between researchers, clinicians, and AI developers in the field of oral cancer.”*

**Dr Moni Abraham Kuriakose, Co-Founder, MD & CEO, Karkinos Healthcare** said *“AI-CoE project undertaken as an initiative under MoE (Ministry of Education), is pathbreaking and fosters an interdisciplinary approach to overcome the global health burden of oral cancer. I congratulate the organizers and wish the best for OCTF conference 2024.”*

### **Consensus Guidelines on Management of Head & Neck Cancer**

Biocon Foundation had taken the initiative to form the OCTF with a mission to ideate, educate and engage stakeholders and thereby, effectively downstage oral cancer in India in 2018. The OCTF is an independent multi-disciplinary task force comprising leading specialists. Under the aegis of OCTF, the first ever Indian clinical practice guidelines on management of head & neck cancer (HNC) were laid down and published in the Indian Journal of Cancer in February 2020. The guidelines have been periodically reviewed and revised. It has been recognized amongst the 13 worldwide clinical practice guidelines by Cancers, an international, peer-reviewed, open access journal of oncology.

At the fifth edition of the Oral Cancer Task Force Conference the updated India-specific guidelines was unveiled which is being published in the *Journal of Cancer Research Statistics and Treatment*. The guidelines update were presented by **Dr Neera Gupta General Manager – Medical Affairs and Clinical Development, Eris Life Sciences Ltd.**

### 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>

For more details, visit: <https://oralcancertaskforce.org/>

### About IISc:

Indian Institute of Science (IISc) was established in 1909 by a visionary partnership between the industrialist Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata, the Mysore royal family and the Government of India. Over the last 115 years, IISc has become India's premier institute for advanced scientific and technological research and education. Its mandate is "to provide for advanced instruction and to conduct original investigations in all branches of knowledge as are likely to promote the material and industrial welfare of India." In 2018, IISc was selected as an Institution of Eminence (IoE) by the Government of India, and it consistently figures among the top Indian institutions in world university rankings.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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