

Press Note

Biocon Foundation and IISc Convene National Experts to Shape India's Oral Cancer Elimination Strategy

Bengaluru, India, July 28, 2026:

Biocon Foundation, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arm of the Biocon Group, in association with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and Translational AI for Networked Universal Health Care (TANUH), commemorated World Head & Neck Cancer Day by hosting the 7th edition of the Oral Cancer Task Force (OCTF) Annual Conference on July 27–28, 2026, at the BITS Pilani, Goa Campus.

The two-day conference brought together leading oncologists, clinicians, public health experts, researchers, policymakers, artificial intelligence specialists and implementation partners to advance India's roadmap towards oral cancer elimination. This year's theme, **'Integrating AI, Research, and Advocacy towards Oral Cancer Elimination,'** underscored the role of artificial intelligence, implementation research and multi-stakeholder collaboration in strengthening oral cancer prevention, early detection and access to timely care.

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Founder & Managing Trustee, Biocon Foundation, and Convenor, OCTF, said, *"India has a unique opportunity to redefine the global approach to oral cancer by harnessing the power of artificial intelligence, scientific innovation, and strong public health systems. Through the Oral Cancer Task Force, we are bringing together expertise across sectors to develop scalable, technology-enabled solutions that can drive early detection, improve access to timely treatment, and ultimately save lives. The goal is to ensure that these innovations reach far and wide, making quality cancer care more equitable and accessible."*

Oral Cancer Task Force Members, *"Oral cancers are responsible for a humongous amount of mortality and morbidity in India. Eliminating this scourge necessitates a comprehensive, pragmatic approach that integrates health and technology through tobacco control and cessation, AI-enabled screening and early detection, timely referral pathways, down staging of disease, and quality care across the continuum of care. It is heartening to know that AI-enabled oral cancer screening at the district level has been implemented. This initiative marks a significant step towards AI-assisted approach to improve oral cancer outcomes."*

Established in 2018 by Biocon Foundation, the Oral Cancer Task Force (OCTF) is an independent multidisciplinary platform bringing together clinicians, researchers, public health experts, policymakers and technology partners to reduce the burden of oral cancer through research, innovation, evidence generation, advocacy and policy engagement. Over the years, OCTF has contributed to the development of consensus guidelines for Oral Potentially Malignant Disorders (OPMDs) and Head & Neck Cancers, while advancing technology-enabled screening approaches across India.

Advancing AI-enabled Screening at Scale

A key highlight of the conference was the progress made under the **Centre of Excellence for Artificial Intelligence (AI-CoE)**, a first-of-its-kind multicentric initiative involving 28 consortium partners with IISc serving as the nodal institution.

The initiative has developed an AI-assisted, mobile phone-based white-light imaging solution that stratifies oral lesions into high- and low-risk categories, enabling early identification of oral cancer. The technology powers **Aarogya Aarohan**, an AI-enabled mobile application currently deployed across Public Health Centres in Goa. Designed for use by frontline healthcare workers, the application can operate on low-cost smartphones, function offline in low-connectivity settings and support referral workflows across different levels of the healthcare system, making point-of-care screening more accessible and scalable.

Since 2014, Biocon Foundation has screened more than 100,000 individuals across multiple states through a community-based oral cancer screening programme. The Foundation contributed over 30,000 annotated oral lesion images that enabled the development of Aarogya Aarohan in collaboration with IISc and TANUH. The deployment of the application has contributed to a ten-fold increase in screening capacity over the past 18 months while helping identify community-specific intervention strategies.

Driving an Integrated Strategy for Oral Cancer Elimination

The conference reaffirmed OCTF's commitment to advancing oral cancer elimination through three strategic priorities:

- Tobacco cessation through education, awareness and school health programmes
- Screening and early detection
- Timely diagnosis and initiation of treatment

Supported by collaborations across public health, clinical research, artificial intelligence and policy, these efforts aim to build a scalable, evidence-based framework for oral cancer control in India.

The conference featured keynote addresses, expert talks, panel discussions, stakeholder consultations and strategic planning sessions covering AI-assisted screening, integration of AI into clinical workflows, digital innovations for community-based screening, tobacco cessation and improving timely access to treatment. Drawing inspiration from global efforts towards cervical cancer elimination, the deliberations will inform the development of a robust and scalable oral cancer elimination strategy that can be adapted across geographies and health systems.

Consensus Guidelines Updated

The conference also unveiled the **2026 update to the Indian Clinical Practice Consensus Guidelines for Head & Neck Cancer**, developed under the aegis of OCTF. Presented by **Dr Kumar Prabhash**, the updated guidelines reflect the latest clinical evidence and continue OCTF's efforts to standardise evidence-based management of head and neck cancers across India. The initiative is coordinated by **Dr Neera Gupta**, Vice President – Clinical Development & Medical Affairs, Immuneel Therapeutics, and the updated guidelines will continue to be published in the *Journal of Cancer Research and Statistics and Treatment*.

The conference brought together experts from Tata Memorial Hospital, IISc, the Government of Goa, Biocon Foundation and leading academic, clinical and public health institutions from India and abroad. Keynote speakers and panellists included **Dr Srinath Reddy, Dr Shekhar Salkar, Dr Guruprasad Naik, Dr Upendra Bhojani, Dr Sumirtha Gandhi**, representatives from the Department of Health Services, Government of Goa, **Prof Paturu Kondaiah, Dr Anupama Shetty, Dr Manisha Khorate, Dr Anupama Borkar, Prof Kunal Korgaonkar, Dr Praveen Birur** and several other national and international experts.

The conference concluded with a renewed commitment from clinicians, researchers, policymakers and technology partners to accelerate the adoption of AI-enabled, evidence-based approaches for oral cancer prevention, early detection and treatment, strengthening India's journey towards eliminating oral cancer as a major public health challenge.

About Oral Cancer Task Force

The Oral Cancer Task Force (OCTF) is an independent, multidisciplinary platform established by Biocon Foundation in 2018 to advance oral cancer prevention and control in India. Bringing together leading clinicians, oncologists, public health experts, researchers, academicians, policymakers, and technology partners, OCTF promotes collaborative action to reduce the burden of oral cancer through research, innovation, advocacy, evidence generation, and policy engagement.

The Task Force has played a pivotal role in developing Indian Clinical Practice Consensus Guidelines for Oral Potentially Malignant Disorders (OPMDs) and Head & Neck Cancers, advancing technology-enabled screening approaches, and fostering the integration of artificial intelligence into community-based oral cancer screening and public health systems. Through its annual scientific forums and multi-stakeholder collaborations, OCTF continues to strengthen India's roadmap towards oral cancer elimination. For more details, visit: <https://oralcancertaskforce.org/>

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>

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 117 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.

About TANUH:

TANUH (Translational AI for Networked Universal Healthcare) is an AI Centre of Excellence under the Ministry of Education, Government of India, hosted at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc). The Centre is dedicated to developing and deploying scalable, AI-driven diagnostic and clinical decision-support solutions for the early detection, prevention, and management of high-burden non-communicable diseases (NCDs) across India. By integrating cutting-edge artificial intelligence with data-driven healthcare, TANUH aims to empower healthcare providers and strengthen health systems through reliable, accessible, and equitable digital health innovations. Its vision is to build a trustworthy, culturally responsive digital health ecosystem that transforms frontline and clinical care, enabling timely, high quality healthcare for every citizen while advancing the goals of universal healthcare.



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