

## **For Favour of Publication**

**Patna, December 10.** A two-day **International Conference on Innovations in Health Information Technology in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs)** got off to a start today. It has been organized by the Centre for Health Policy (CHP) at Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI). Its core aim is to reimagine how digital technology can address challenges and strengthen decision-making in healthcare in such countries.

Senior Journalist and Former Press Secretary to the President of India Shri Ajay Kumar Singh stated that this conference was very timely. ADRI has been facilitating the understanding of Bihar at the national level and has continued to do so with respect to use of digital technology in healthcare. Digital technological change is inevitable but we have to ensure accessibility, affordability and empathy for the people. Shri Shashank Shekhar Sinha, the CEO of BSSS, which gets technical support from ADRI, proudly reported the fact that although Bihar's population is not very large comparatively, it is topping the nation when it comes to "Scan and Share" or registration through digital token generation of patients. It is also ranked number one in DHIS registration and third in Electronic Health Records (EHR). As far as ABHA is concerned, it is ranked fourth. This is a major achievement and Bihar is leading in digitalization of health. Additional Secretary in the Health Department of the Government of Bihar Smt. Tshering Y Bhutia elaborated through her personal experiences on how Bihar government initiatives have made healthcare accessible to the common people. This is proved by the fact that in just 6 months, the state has recorded more than 1.65 digital OPD registrations.

Professor (Brig.) Dr. Raju Agarwal of AIIMS-Patna presented examples of different innovations developed by his institute. They included Swasthya mobile App for e-consultations and viewing test reports, remote consultation in Telemedicine, and AI-enabled medical devices for interpreting X-rays, ECGs, etc. Dr. Bindey Kumar, the Director of IGIMS-Patna said that we have made progress since 1918. This is because in 1918, Spanish Flu had caused 50-100 million deaths but the Covid-19 pandemic had a comparatively fewer 7 million deaths. So, we have made progress mainly due to the digital transformation that has taken place. Dr. Ragini Mishra, State Surveillance Officer sketched out IDSP's journey from paper to portal with the help of ADRI team.

Dr. Ravi Shankar Singh, Medical Director of Jay Prabha Medanta Hospital stated that the healthcare sector is the biggest gainer of the development of AI, and especially so after the Covid pandemic. Professors from national academic institutes of repute like TISS; IIPH, Gandhinagar; IIHMR, etc. and global representatives from Uganda, England, and Qatar added valuable insights to the program. This included the Ministry from Botswana. Earlier, the Member-Secretary of ADRI, Dr. Ashmita Gupta welcomed all the guests. She said that all LMICs are standing at a critical point. Digitalization in healthcare can only succeed if we address the challenges of infrastructure and the digital divide. SBI General Manager Shri R. Natarajan pointed out that banks are also involved in digitalization of healthcare management. State Information Commissioner of the Government of Bihar Shri Prakash Kumar suggested the building of institutions which can serve as a bridge between medical researchers and the public. About 150 public health experts from India and abroad participated in this event. Dr. Sanchita Mahapatra brought up the Vote of Thanks.

(Abhishek Prasad)