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Silver Jubilee conference of the Karnataka Association of Community Health – walking down the memory lane

Girish N Rao

The Karnataka Association of Community Health was formally registered as an association of community health and public health professionals in January 1984. The association was born out of the necessity to nurture and encourage local talent, which would have otherwise got lost in the ocean of national / regional scientific deliberations.

Since inception, true to its intentions, KACH has regularly conducted annual conferences, which have been hosted by a local medical college along with a local self-government or NGOs. Apart from a lull of about 3 to 4 years in the beginning of the millennium, it is indeed a matter of pride that the Silver Jubilee conference is being hosted at the prestigious Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute, Bangalore which has given birth to several of the Community Health Professionals of our state. Aplyt, the founder President of KACH is also the President and presiding officer of the KACH Silvercon 2013.

The Association now has nearly 550 members from the different medical colleges and local self-bodies across Karnataka. The activities have progressively expanded and KACH now also conducts an annual refresher course for exam going postgraduates.

The Association to encourage professionals confers the following awards: KACH Best Community Health Professional Award, KACH B M Patil Oration, KACH Young Scientist Award, KACH Silvercon Best Community Health Practitioner Award, and KACH Prolific Community Health Literature Award. The last two awards have been instituted with effect from the year 2013. The KACH Silvercon Best Community Health Practitioner Award has been instituted to recognize and felicitate desirable community health practices by organisation / individuals especially those who are not members of KACH. In addition, KACH millennium awards are given to the Best papers (Thematic and Non-thematic) for Undergraduate and Postgraduate students along with a best poster award for presentation made during an annual conference.

As a body of professionals, KACH is gradually flowing up as an organisation and a force to reckon with. In the past, the association has contributed to the Karnataka Task Force of Health and Family Welfare and also for development of public health policies and programmes. Members of the association have come together to develop common and uniform exam practices for both undergraduate and postgraduate students. It is to the credit of KACH members that even UG exam family studies are being conducted in the field. The association is proud of its illustrious members who have done yeoman service to the discipline by their individual and organisational contributions and have been able to touch upon the different facets of life and living as is often referred to as ‘from womb to tomb’. Significant contributions have been made with respect to starting new programmes to aid better implementation of the national and regional programmes. Members of the association have occupied very high-ranking offices at State, National, and International levels.

There are several challenges that the Association has to contend. The seeming perception gap between Community Health and Public Health and that between academics and practice needs a larger debate and focused deliberation. There is a need to define the requisite competencies for practice of Community Health / Public Health. The official publications of the Association, its two prestigious journals, the Karnataka Association of Community Health and Indian Journal of Community Health, need to be re-vitalised. With a bright future to look forward to, the association takes

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pride in celebrating the nearly 30 years of its existence. For details of the association, please contact Dr M Dayananda, Secretary KACH, Professor of Community Medicine, Mysore Medical College and Research Institute, Mysore - 1 or mail to kachjournal@gmail.com.