

Preface



I am extremely happy to publish the Annual Report of the Centre for the year 2006-07 and 2007-08. The purpose of this report is to look back in to the brief history of the Centre since its inception and glance at the progress achieved so far.

During the Sixth Five Year Plan Period (1980-85), the concept of Regional Medical Research Centres (RMRCs) was evolved in the ICMR. The Governing Body of the ICMR approved in principle the establishment of a RMRC at Bangalore (later shifted to Belgaum) at its 50th meeting held on 2nd May 1980. Twenty acres of land was allotted to ICMR in 1984 by Government of Karnataka in Belgaum. The objective of establishing this Centre was to address traditional remedies / herbal medicine in the areas of regional and national health problems, mainly due to close proximity to the Western Ghats, one of the global biodiversity hot spots. Although the construction of residential quarters was initiated and completed by PWD around 2000, due to several reasons, the Centre could not be established.

I was given an additional charge of this Centre in March 2003 and was transferred here as an Officer-in-Charge in January 2004. By that time in 2003, Mr. Shripad Bhat, Research Assistant, Tuberculosis Research Centre, Chennai was here. During my first visit itself I realized that it was a challenging task to establish the Centre; and it was certainly not easy, as even to initiate any plan of action, no basic facilities were available. However, Dr. V. D. Patil, Principal, J.N Medical College, Belgaum and Prof. B. S. Kodkany, Incharge, HRRC offered us an office space in the Research Wing of their Medical College which helped us to establish this Centre in the initial stages. We decided to move in to our campus in August 2004. Due to the support from ICMR-HQ, especially from Dr. Vasantha Muthuswamy, Chief of the Basic Medical Sciences Division, contract staff was sanctioned and this barren place, slowly started humming with core activities.

The Centre was officially inaugurated on 20th May 2006 by our the then Director General Prof. N. K. Ganguly, Shri Shankarandaji who was responsible for getting the Centre in Belgaum, and our MP Shri Suresh Angadiji. We are indeed grateful to Prof. Ganguly, for all his support and encouragement which enabled us to establish this Centre. I am extremely happy and proud to inform you that from a couple of hands in August 2004, we have now grown to the strong team of 33 members.

After the initial struggle for infrastructure development, we have begun research activities in some of the thrust areas for which the Centre has been established. Apart from extra-mural funding for 2 projects from the Council, we have now research projects funded by CCRAS, NMPB, Department of AYUSH, and Department of International Development, U.K. In the meanwhile, we have established close collaboration with KLE University, KLE'S Prabhakar Kore Hospital and Medical Research Centre, KLE College of

Pharmacy, BMK College of Ayurveda, KRC College of Horticulture, Arabhavi, Karnatak University, Dharwad and National Aids Research Institute, Pune.

As per the mandate of the Centre, we are collecting information on the prevalence of various diseases in Belgaum and nearby areas and the role of herbal medicine in their treatment. Detailed scientific information has also been collected on ethnomedicinal plants of Western Ghats of India, which are used by traditional healers for the treatment of various diseases. A database of this is expected to be ready by August 2008. As a societal activity, we have also established a Museum of ethnomedicinal plants of Western Ghats and the garden of medicinal plants in the campus. Screening of the biological activities of the medicinal plants is also in progress.

I am aware that we have just begun our journey and there is a long way ahead to go. The major challenge in the field of herbal medicine, after its documentation and authentication of resources and samples, will be their standardization and quality control. Scientific validation of herbal medicine and undertaking clinical trials for selective leads will be the next difficult and challenging task. However, with the continuing support from the HQ and close collaborations with neighboring institutes, we hope to develop state-of-the-art facilities to carry out high-quality research in the field of herbal drug. Our ultimate goal would be to establish this Centre as a premium Institute for Research in Herbal Medicine and contribute meaningfully to the human health and welfare with the aim of improving the quality of their life.

S. D. Kholkute

Scientist 'F' & Officer-in-Charge