Press Release

1st South Asia and Asia Pacific International Congress on Diabetes, Hypertension & Metabolic Syndrome in Pregnancy

Colombo to host the 1st South Asia and Asia Pacific International Congress on Diabetes, Hypertension & Metabolic Syndrome in Pregnancy

Over 350 delegates from the South Asia and Asia Pacific Region and other countries around the world are expected to gather in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo between 8th -10th September 2016 to attend the 1st Asia Pacific Congress on Diabetes, Hypertension & Metabolic Syndrome in Pregnancy in Sri Lanka organized by the South Asia Initiative for Diabetes in Pregnancy (SAIDIP) and the DIP Asia-Pacific Symposium on Diabetes, Hypertension, Metabolic Syndrome and Pregnancy (DIPAP) being held at the Cinnamon Grand, Colombo.

His Excellency Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and Hon Dr. Rajitha Senaratne, Minister of Health & Indigenous Medicine will address the participants at the opening ceremony on 8th Sept 2016.

The conference, supported by the Ministry of Health Sri Lanka, the World Health Organization (Sri Lanka Country Office) and the World Diabetes Foundation, will feature talks from renowned international and regional experts including the incumbent presidents of The International Federation of Obstetrics and Gynecology (FIGO), International Diabetes Federation (IDF), and Chairman World Diabetes Foundation (WDF).

Eight low and middle-income countries that account for over half the global live births, also contribute to more than half of the global diabetes burden; Bangladesh, India and Pakistan among them, also fare poorly on the issue of maternal and child health.

Hyperglycemia in Pregnancy (HIP) is one of the most common medical conditions women encounter during pregnancy. One in six live births is to women with some degree of high blood sugar. The majority of women with HIP have gestational diabetes (GDM), which develops due to hormonal changes of pregnancy and is confined to the duration of pregnancy.
Women in the developing world especially from South Asia are particularly vulnerable to GDM and considered at high risk. The International Diabetes Federation (IDF) estimates that about 25% of live births in South Asia are impacted by HIP. Yet these countries do not routinely test all pregnant women for diabetes. Of the relatively few women who are tested and detected, only a small proportion receive treatment, and even fewer receive the critical postpartum follow up and care they need.

Gestational diabetes is associated with

- Significantly increased risk of complications during pregnancy and delivery such as preeclampsia (high blood pressure), obstructed labor caused by large babies, postpartum hemorrhage, infections, still births, premature delivery, newborn deaths due to respiratory problems, hypoglycemia and birth injuries. These contribute significantly to maternal and newborn morbidity and mortality
- Highest risk of future diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. Almost half of women with GDM develop type 2 diabetes within 10 years of childbirth without any preventive care.
- Children born to women with GDM are also at a very high risk of obesity, earlier onset type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. HIP perpetuates the risk of diabetes into the next generation.

Addressing GDM has impact at three levels

- Helps lower maternal and newborn morbidity and mortality
- Provides opportunity to reduce the risk of future diabetes and cardiovascular disease in women with GDM
- Break the chain of intergenerational transmission of diabetes and metabolic problems.

"Focusing attention on GDM is a sustainable and cost effective way of addressing the double disease burden of high maternal and newborn morbidity and mortality and rising rates of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. It also provides the opportunity of addressing two important components of the sustainable development goal 3 (maternal and newborn health and NCDs) with one comprehensive intervention" says Dr. Anil Kapur, Chairman of the World Diabetes Foundation.

The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) recommends that all pregnant women should be tested for hyperglycemia using a simple one-step procedure. The recently released FIGO Initiative on Gestational Diabetes Mellitus: A Pragmatic Guide for Diagnosis, Management and Care (http://www.ijgo.org/issue/S0020-7292(15)X0015-4) offers strategies and pragmatic options for countries with resource challenges. FIGO stresses that all countries have an obligation to implement the best practices they can.

“Given the interaction between hyperglycemia and poor pregnancy outcomes – and the role of in utero imprinting, in increasing the risk of diabetes and cardio-metabolic disorders in offspring of mothers with hyperglycemia in pregnancy, as well as increasing maternal vulnerability to future diabetes and cardiovascular disorders – there needs to be a greater global focus on preventing, testing, diagnosing and managing hyperglycemia in pregnancy” says Professor Moshe Hod, Chair of the FIGO HIP Working Group and Co President of the Conference. The FIGO Working Group on Hyperglycemia in Pregnancy
and Maternal Nutrition will also meet in Colombo on 7th September ahead of the International Conference.

“While addressing GDM provides unique opportunities, the problem is the lack of public awareness about GDM, as well as low awareness, resources and capacity within the health system for testing and providing care" says Dr. Hema Divakar Co-Chair of the FIGO HIP Working Group and Past President of The Federation of Obstetrics and Gynecology Societies of India (FOGSI).

FIGO calls on policy makers to ensure that public health measures are in place to increase awareness, access, affordability and acceptance of preconception counselling, prenatal and postnatal services, and a continuous and seamless link between healthcare providers and services through a Family Health approach.

Supporting the need for capacity building, Prof Chandrika Wijeyaratne Co President and local host of the Conference says" our experience from the Nirogi Maatha project in Sri Lanka shows that we need to involve and train health workers at all levels. Taking advantage of the international congress and in collaboration with the Education and Training Division, Family Health Bureau and NCD bureau of the Ministry of Health Sri Lanka we are taking the opportunity to organize a workshop– 'Pragmatic approach to GDM /HIP - from pre conception to long term postpartum care' to train the local work force, both field and hospital based, from throughout Sri Lanka, on 7th and 8th September ".

Explaining the aim of the conference Prof V Seshiah, Distinguished Professor, The Tamil Nadu Dr MGR Medical University and the Founder Chairman of the Diabetes in Pregnancy Study Group India (DIPSI) and the force behind the South Asia Initiative on Diabetes in Pregnancy (SAIDIP) says – "hyperglycemia in pregnancy is a major contributor to the rising rates of diabetes, CVD and poor maternal and newborn health all over South Asia. We share similar genetics, lifestyles and socio economic development. Our health systems more or less face similar problems of low resources and limited funding. It is therefore necessary that we learn from each other and share our experiences to tackle them. It is our hope that this conference and the South Asia Initiative on Diabetes in Pregnancy will provide the platform for exchange of ideas and better practices not only in the region but beyond to the Asia Pacific Region"

For more details Contact

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About FIGO

The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) is the only organization to bring together professional societies of obstetricians and gynecologists on a global basis. Operating for over 60 years, FIGO currently has Member Societies in 130 countries and territories. FIGO's vision is for women to achieve the highest possible standards of physical, mental, reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing throughout their lives.

About the FIGO HIP Working Group

In 2015, FIGO published the first evidence-based global recommendations on GDM for health care professionals. In 2016 an official Working Group was established to globally disseminate the guidelines and work on their implementation in priority countries. The composition of the group includes global experts and representatives from key partner organisations including the International Diabetes Federation, World Diabetes Foundation and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine. It is funded through unrestricted educational grants from Novo Nordisk and Perkin Elmer. For more information, please visit http://www.figo.org/working-group-hyperglycemia-pregnancy

About SAIDIP

The South Asia Initiative on Diabetes in Pregnancy is an informal network of health care professionals working in the area of diabetes in pregnancy in the South Asia Region. It aims to further collaborative research, capacity building and share experiences and best practices to tackle diabetes during pregnancy and the health challenge it poses for maternal and new born health, the future burden of Diabetes and CVD and to women's health overall.

About DIP Symposia

Diabetes in Pregnancy Symposia organized all over Europe over the last two decades, has grown tremendously since the 1st meeting and now attracts over 1300 participants from over 70 countries. DIP is now a leading platform in maternal and fetal medicine and provides an opportunity to share the most up-to-date knowledge, research and the tools, techniques and integrative approaches needed to address and ensure optimal outcomes for pregnancies complicated by diabetes, hypertension and metabolic syndrome.