

## A joint initiative between GSK Pharmaceuticals Ltd. and Regional Centre for Biotechnology (RCB) to develop PhD programs in biostatistics and bioinformatics under GSK's 'Trust in Science' Initiative

*The programs cover scholarship and expert guidance for completion of doctoral degrees programs to equip students with high-end expertise to boost biopharma research for India and the world*

**New Delhi, 26 June 2019:** The Regional Centre for Biotechnology (RCB), an academic institution of national importance established by the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, under the auspices of UNESCO, and GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals Ltd. (GSK Pharmaceutical Ltd.) today launched the Trust in Science Programme to develop doctoral programs (PhDs) in the fields of biostatistics and bioinformatics. The launch took place in the presence of **Dr. Renu Swarup**, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, **Honourable Sir Dominic Asquith KCMG**, British High Commissioner to India, **Prof. Sudhanshu Vрати**, Executive Director, RCB, and **Mr. A Vaidheesh**, Vice President, & MD, GSK Pharmaceutical Ltd.

**Dr. Renu Swarup, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology** said, *"We would like to create more opportunities in India for post graduate doctoral education in science. The GSK – RCB collaboration allows us to do just that, specifically in two niche, high-valued fields: biostatistics and bioinformatics. The goal is to provide students with a specialized course that addresses current industry needs and opportunities. This, we believe, will help them better contribute to India's biopharma and medical research needs."*

Under this initiative, the RCB will develop program content, manage logistics and oversee the running of the full-time programs. GSK Pharmaceutical Ltd. will provide funding and ensure all course content is shaped to address current industry needs and opportunities. Students with a master's degree in biostatistics, maths, and bioinformatics are eligible for the PhD courses.

**Honourable Sir Dominic Asquith KCMG** said, *"When it comes to medicine and healthcare, quality partnerships are already helping our nations move forward. Beyond government to government collaboration, partnerships between the private and the public sectors hold great potential for mutually beneficial breakthroughs, such as the one between RCB and GSK Pharmaceutical Ltd. I see this partnership as the next step in our ongoing story of innovation and partnership, which will also boost India's growing strength in pharmaceuticals."*

With recent increase in health and pharmaceutical research, there is urgent need for trained biostatisticians and bioinformaticians in India.<sup>1</sup> Many young Indians want to pursue specialized bioinformatics and biostatistics courses, but do not find suitable options in the country. Moreover, current courses are not updated.

**Prof. Sudhanshu Vрати** said, *“The interdisciplinary degree programs in Biostatistics and Bioinformatics are designed to promote academia-industry interaction where the doctoral students form the bridge between the two. Through these programs we hope to produce high-quality human resource capable of driving innovation in biopharma research.”*

**Mr. A Vaidheesh** said, *“While students are being trained at the graduate and post-graduate level, we recognize that there is a gap between the theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom and the practical hands-on understanding of how to apply these principles to real data. There is a need to widen India’s scientific community’s expertise in these subjects. One way to do this is to start young, and that is the primary goal of this MoU. We plan to work with budding scientists in the early stages of their research career and arm them with the necessary skill sets to navigate through big data and informatics successfully. We will also ensure that students who complete the course are better prepared for a career in the pharmaceutical industry.”*

GSK Pharmaceutical Ltd.’s “Trust in Science” initiative is a novel public-private partnership model to build R&D capacity for development and discovery in science. The pillars of this initiative are: scientific excellence, trust and talent development in line with GSK’s Science, Technology and Culture values. The initiative was launched in 2011 initially to engage with leading researchers and institutions in Latin America, focused on Brazil and Argentina. GSK Pharmaceutical Ltd. is pleased to expand this initiative beyond Latin America to other emerging markets such as India. <sup>ii, iii</sup>

#### **About Regional Centre for Biotechnology**

Regional Centre for Biotechnology (RCB) is an academic institution established by the Department of Biotechnology, Govt. of India with regional and global partnerships synergizing with the programmes of UNESCO as a Category II Centre. The primary focus of RCB is to provide world class education, training and conduct innovative research at the interface of multiple disciplines to create high quality human resource in disciplinary and interdisciplinary areas of biotechnology in a globally competitive research milieu. In 2016, RCB was recognised as an Institution of National Importance by the Parliament of India.

#### **About GSK Pharmaceutical Ltd.**

GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals Limited is a subsidiary of GlaxoSmithKline plc, one of the world's leading research-based pharmaceutical and healthcare companies, committed to improving the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer. For more information, visit [www.gsk-india.com](http://www.gsk-india.com)

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<sup>i</sup> Singh, R., Zodpey, S. P., Sharma, K., Bangdiwala, S. I., & Ughade, S. (2012). Landscaping biostatistics education in India. *Indian Journal of Public Health*, 56(4), 273.