AIPH Public Health Conference 2019
Experts call for urgent action on population and resource management

“A public health system must be central to all health policy management and operations, and should cement and integrate sociopolitical issues and their connectedness with health issues,” parliamentarian Nafisa Shah stressed at the plenary session of the Public Health Conference organized by the Jinnah Sindh Medical University’s APPNA Institute of Public Health on Saturday. She stressed on there being a dire need of a legal framework to emphasize the central position of public health system in society. “An additional system of alerting, monitoring and surveillance is also the need of the hour.” She observed that at present Pakistan does not have a coherent, interconnected, coordinated, conscious health system which needs to change.

Public health experts from all over Sindh participated in this first multi-disciplinary conference held at the Sindh Medical College campus. Majority of experts pointed out population explosion as the issue needing urgent attention owing to its drastic impact on resource management and on the overall health and nutrition status of families.

Renowned economist Dr Qaiser Bengali declared health related problems of the masses as manifestations of massive state failure. He quoted from his work on household surveys revealing distressing stories of food insecurity. “Some people cite the rush outside posh restaurants in Zamzama as the evidence of growing economy. I tell them to visit the same restaurants at 2 in the morning when there are even bigger queues outside the same restaurants of women and children awaiting the leftovers from the day.” He stressed that these women do not just belong to the poor class. “You would see that some of the women are sitting while some are standing a little apart with their faces covered in niqabs. These women belong to the lower middle class, driven to secure food for their households alongside the poor of the city,” he said.
Prominent physicist and social commentator Pervez Hoodbhoy talked about setting national priorities and stressed that we must figure out what is more important for our survival. He asked how a bulging population can be served in social amenities within the limited resources of the country. He also emphasized on governing of public health institutions as central to the delivery of healthcare goals to the masses.

The Vice Chancellor Jinnah Sindh Medical University Professor S.M. Tariq Rafi recommended a university based framework to identify indigenous issues, and find and implement solutions on their level with budget and authority. He gave the example of the JSMU teams visiting Diplo and Nagarparkar under Sindh Government’s initiative where they are working on long term sustainable solution, “Our teams do not go there to distribute milk and food packs. We have carried out long term needs assessments and are working on providing training to the local human resource in dealing with the health of the population there.”

Pro Vice Chancellor Dr Lubna Ansari Baig pointed out that the conference aimed to contribute to the public health discourse around the world from the perspective of Sindh. She emphasized on the involvement of all the stakeholders in the province in unified and focused efforts to improve public health to achieve the goal of universal healthcare.

The theme of the day-long conference was “Universal Health Coverage: Everyone Everywhere.” A total of 75 papers were presented in the conference covering areas like Universal Health Coverage, Maternal and Child Health, Role of Universities and Civil Society Organizations in Strengthening Health System, Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases, Environmental and Occupational Health, and Medical Education. This conference contributed towards building linkages between multidisciplinary experts working within the health system. This event is part of JSMU’s commitment to its vision of improving the communities it serves.

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Jinnah Sindh Medical University is a public-sector university established in 2012 when the city’s premier institution Sindh Medical College was given the status of a University. Since then, the University has opened seven more institutes and affiliated 10 colleges. The total enrolment of medical and dental students exceeds 7,000, making it the largest medical university in Sindh. Its components are Sindh Medical College (SMC), APPNA-Institute of Public Health (AIPH), Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (IPS), Sindh Institute of Oral Health Sciences (SIOHS), Institute of Health and Business management and Social Sciences (IOHBMSS), Institute of Nursing, Institute of Physiotherapy & Rehabilitation, and Institute of Family Medicine.

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کہتا ہے جنہوں نے بھی اپنے کارکردہ تجربات اور مستقبل کا لمحہ، عمل کے حوالے سے مفصّل گفتگو کی اور کسی نئی تجربے کے لیے ان کی بدولت کی ہے۔

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