

ACTIVITIES REPORT

Problem solvers for better health

The Second National Conference of Problem Solvers for Better Health (PSBH) held in Thiruvananthapuram on December 15–16, 2003 was attended by around 150 students and 25 faculty members from more than 35 medical colleges. This global movement coordinated by Health Action by People, a health non-governmental organisation in India, aims to inculcate awareness about community needs in medical students. At a two-day workshop, students identify a community need and plan and conduct a study, helped by resource persons and their faculty. A few attend the annual conference where they share their studies with their peers.

The exercise encourages a questioning attitude in medical students, an aptitude for grassroot research and a desire to know the community's problems. Projects presented at the conference ranged from issues in environmental health, occupational health and communicable diseases to bringing about changes in their institutions. Most also highlighted the ethical aspects of their study.

The movement is progressing from its modest beginnings in Kerala and has reached Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. Tie-ups with community medicine departments encourage students to adopt the problem-solving approach in the rural communities where they are posted. A fixed amount of money paid to the college per completed student project is used to acquire computers to help students plan, document and analyse their findings.

The revised Medical Council of India guidelines require students to do a research project during their MBBS. The PSBH process offers such an opportunity.

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