CRIKC-BRNS Meeting report

The BRNS young scientist CRIKC meeting was held at ICSSR complex, Panjab University (PU) on 23 March 2013. Prof Rupinder Tiwari, Dean, PU chaired the session introducing the presenters and BRNS task force members on behalf of CRIKC, an inter institute forum of Chandigarh region. This program was coordinated by Prof Alok Srivastava, Dept of Chemistry, PU who also addressed the gathering. It was informed that BRNS, which is part of Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), is interested in funding innovative research projects in the country. The BRNS task force was represented by Secretary, BRNS, Prof Markendeya and Prof Reddy among others. The task force members made brief presentations about the fundable research schemes of DAE, emphasizing curiosity driven research projects that interface with Life sciences, Chemistry and Medicine, encouraging the faculty/scientists to submit their research proposals. Prof Tiwari also informed everyone that PM had called the VC office to enquire and congratulate the VC about the establishment of CRIKC in Chandigarh.

Before the individual scientists started their presentations, Prof Grover, Vice Chancellor, Panjab University joined the program and gave an overview of CRIKC which is also being supported by Sh Pawan Bansal who has given a grant of Rs 1 crore out of MPLADS for this purpose. Prof Grover sug-

gested a roadmap for faculty of these Institutes to come together and convert Chandigarh into a Science & Technology magnet and pointed out that with joint efforts of like minded Directors of the region, like Prof Chawla and Prof Sathyamurthy, CRIKC could soon acquire national leadership, much like the research lobbies at Bangalore, Hyderabad and Chennai. He also informed that a new shuttle bus service is being launched to foster research collaboration among Institutes in the region, highlighting the need to lobby for creation of a common 1000 room hostel for research scholars in the region. He also suggested that atleast 100 INSPIRE faculties could be mobilized (under DST flagship program of 1000 INSPIRE national faculties) to join these Institutes of Chandigarh region.

The 10 individual presentations from various Institutes included faculty from NIPER, IMTECH, NABHI (DBT Institute), CSIO, IISER, P.U and PGI. The scope of research proposals included interdisciplinary areas such as nanodelivery, biosensors, spectroscopy, plant biotechnology, animal husbandry, neurobiology, theoretical chemistry and pharmacology. On behalf of PGI, Akshay Anand presented two research ideas, one, comparative analysis of transplantation of lineage negative stem cells derived from human fetal ciliary epithelium characterized in the lab and those derived

from umbilical cord in functional rescue of laser injured retinal degeneration. The second one included proposed investigation to rescue artificially induced memory deficits by increasing brain bioavailability of *Bacopa* in mouse brain through delivery of *nano bacopa* in the animal model of Alzheimer's Disease. Both these proposals represent the lab's focus on pioneering therapies in neurodegenerative disorders, utilizing molecular and electrophysiological approaches. Besides, an overview of lab's academic contributions was also given; this included recent publications, neuroscience communication activities, implementation of periodical research audits (through GLP), expanded diagnostic capacity and its international collaborations thus making a case for both funding from DAE and PGI's activism in CRIKC.

Prof Inder Pal Singh from IITC expressed willingness to collaborate by offering to test a novel anti-amylogenic synthetic analog in the animal models developed at Neuroscience Research lab, Department of Neurology.

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