

KMC Manipal takes lead in trans inclusion, and commits to inclusivity on its campus

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Place: Manipal, Karnataka

The Dean of Kasturba Medical College, Dr. Sharath Kumar Rao, on Friday 19th November 2021 in an event held in partnership with the TransCare MedEd team announced the institutions' plan to take steps towards trans-inclusion in its campus and hospital. Student Council member, Shashank, also promised that the students will work towards inclusivity. This was announced during the event Transcare Campus Connect: KMC Manipal to commemorate the International Day of Transgender Remembrance which is observed to remember the transgender lives lost.

The announcement comes in the backdrop of recent legal developments in India that have highlighted how the current medical curriculum has content that is derogatory to the LGBTQIA+ community. These include recent verdicts from the Madras High Court, Kerala High Court and a directive from the National Medical Commission. Creating inclusive teaching materials in the medical education is the next step for following through with these developments.

"If not now, when? If not us, who?" said Dr. Sharath Kumar Rao, highlighting how institutes like KMC Manipal and university campuses such as MAHE must take leadership in this regard. He spoke about the efforts taken by the institute in disability inclusion and that a similar initiative will be taken towards trans inclusion through consultations and dialogue in a time bound manner.

The event was organised as part of Project TransCare MedEd which is in association with Sangath and University of Chicago. TransCare MedEd aims to create competencies for the provision of transgender-affirmative health provision. These competencies are being developed for inclusion in the medical, dental and nursing curriculum.

"The medical curriculum does not equip students to provide sensitive care to transgender persons. In fact, it desensitises them and many doctors currently provide care that is coloured by discrimination, stigma and abuse." says Dr. Kirtana R Nayak, chief organiser of the event and Head of the Dept. of Medical Education, KMC Manipal.

A highlight of the event was a talk by Dr. Aqsa Shaikh, a leading trans advocate, a community medicine specialist, and a transgender woman, who spoke from her own life and emphasised the need for trans-inclusion and sensitisation to start from schools, through medical colleges and further in workplaces and at homes. "Unfortunately, parents often become the enemy of the child. Gender is often forced on a child based on their sex assigned at birth. Parents need to talk about gender with their children. Campuses need to enable conversations and inclusion" says Dr. Aqsa.

Students of KMC engaged in response to Dr. Aqsa's inspiring talk and were keen on knowing the steps to be taken towards making their campuses inclusive. Dr. Aqsa clarified that the TransCare initiative's Queer Ambassador program aims to assist the students towards inclusivity through a mentorship and coaching program by networking them with

other similar initiatives across India and by sourcing ideas from the students themselves creating a transactional learning platform.

The event also saw the release by the Dean of a booklet on queer sensitivity, titled 'Colours Among Us'. The booklet is available online at www.sangath.in/transcare-resources .

The event saw participation from KMC faculty, students from various institutions under MAHE, as well as the TransCare MedEd team which had convened for a series of workshops in Manipal. The team comprises of professionals from UCMS, HIMSR, Sangath and University of Chicago.

Contact

Dr. Kirtana R Nayak

Email: kirtana.pai@manipal.edu

Phone:

For more details visit www.sangath.in/transcaremeded

Photos







