

'Indian students' career revolve only around IT'

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The conference sought after promoting awareness on the applications of [Next Generation Sequencing \(NGS\)](#) technologies and bioinformatics for NGS among the Indian research community.

This year's 4th edition of the conference was graced by Dr P Satish Chandra, director and vice-chancellor, NIMHANS.

In his inaugural address, he said, "Our country has unique health issues and we need to find solutions. I don't think anyone else will work on our problems. We have been working on genetics for some time looking at rare disorders and genes associated with them."

Focusing on the neurological disorders, he opined, "There are rare disorders and we don't know much yet as to what causes them. Thus it is a fertile ground which needs to be probed. Nimhans has special interest in neurodegenerative disorders as they are complex and needs a lot of work."

The Life Sciences job and internship fair, a major highlight of the conference, drew many job seekers, researchers and students.

Companies including Biocon, InterpretOmics, Genotypic Technology, Thermo Fisher Scientific, Future Bio Science, Shodhaka Life Sciences and SciGenom Labs were found fishing for the right applicants for their available vacancies.

The job fair session was hosted by Mr Tony Jose, CEO, Clevergene, who pointed that in India many students' careers revolve only around information technology (IT).

"At times LinkedIn becomes way too slow and expensive. In the life sciences, there are no common outreach platforms for job seekers. To address this we started BioHiring, a tool to help candidates in finding jobs and internships," he revealed.

'BioHiring' is a soon-to-be launched web platform created by Clevergene for hiring potential candidates in the Life Sciences space. This platform is said to open the door for meaningful interactions between employers and job seekers.

Speakers including Dr C N Ramchand, CEO, Saksin Lifesciences; Dr Kshitish Acharya, founder & director, Shodhaka Life Sciences; and Ms Anu Sharma, founder, The HR Practice, spoke on the industry challenges in finding the right talent pool and offered helpful insights into hiring dynamics, facing interviews and creating catchy curriculum vitae (CVs).

Dr Ramchand, former VP and head of drug discovery research at Sun Pharmaceuticals, who has experience in hiring candidates pointed that India is a home to 22,000 pharmaceutical companies, out of which only 100-200 organizations are very large.

"Worldwide we represent only 2-3 percent in terms of quality and quantity. Post 1995 when the product development patent was signed in India, pharma companies began setting up their research base here. Ranbaxy, Dr Reddy's, Sun Pharma and Glenmark began their drug discovery research here," he recalled.

He held that unfortunately no pharma company in India so far has been able to discover any new drugs. "Dr Reddy's came up with 2 to 3 molecules up to phase-2. Sun's molecules reached till phase-3 and failed. This is an unfortunate situation," he lamented.

Dr Ramchand questioned why India was unable to shine in drug discovery. "Is it because of lack of capital? I don't think so," he stated. "Large organizations have enough funds to invest in drug discovery."

Talking about hiring trends, he commented, "GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) used to interview about 150 candidates to hire one single candidate who is employable. When you move up north in India, it is easier to find such candidates than down south. I have no idea why this is."

He also expressed that in the US, teachers opt for teaching out of pure interest. "Unfortunately here in India, if nothing works out, then candidates become teachers, because engineering and medicine are sought after by most of the students. Poor teachers pose a major problem," he added.

For students aspiring to pursue careers in Life Sciences, Dr Ramchand advised, "When applying at an institution, find out at least 1 or 2 good motivating teachers. Seek institutions where good research is happening which will open avenues for learning new technologies and fundamentals. Technologies are changing very fast. Sadly, our syllabuses change once in three years or so. If you get an opportunity to study PhD in an organization or an industry-sponsored environment, you will learn a lot more. The masters programs in UK is just for a year and you learn nothing."

Another speaker, Ms Anu Sharma presented on tackling interviews and understanding hiring process from a human resource (HR) professional perspective.

"The pressure on HR is unbelievable. They have set targets and numbers to adhere to. Finding and hiring the right personnel is highly challenging," she said.

"Learn as much as you can about why the company exists, what their business models are. Familiarize yourself with their website and online presence, the work they do, and their markets. You can even check out the LinkedIn profiles of key people in the organization that you are interested in and learn about the company's leadership," she told participants.

Ms Anu feels that there are adequate jobs in the market. "The responsibility to get a job is your responsibility. Make your CV compelling that recruiters would want to call you," she opined.

As a tip, she said, "Adding the same keywords in your CV that employers use in a job advertisement will increase your chances of getting hired. Also, you have to mandatorily have some industry experience, and mention the projects and internships you have completed."

In her concluding remarks, Ms Anu summarized, "Always work and simultaneously hunt for a job. The interview is not a viva voce. Know your basics. Communication is the key here. Industry linkages, an outstanding CV and knowledge about the industry are major catalysts."

The NGBT 2014 conference had concurrent session covering an array of themes including Genomics Technologies, Plant Genomics, Clinical/Medical Genomics, Animal/Conservation Genomics, Drug Development, Population Genomics and Disease Genomics among others.

A separate poster display aisle was also set up for students and researchers at the conference.

The keynote address was by Dr Stephan C Schuster, research director, Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore, who delivered a presentation on 'Population Genomics and Informed Breeding Aid Species Conservation'.