

ACTOR SUHASINI MANIRATNAM LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO END STIGMA AGAINST PEOPLE WITH TB

Kicking off the World TB Day observations in the city, actor and social activist Suhasini Maniratnam launched the 'Speak Up to Fight Stigma. Stop TB' campaign.

The campaign will focus on encouraging people affected by TB, their family members, TB survivors and healthcare workers to speak about their experience with TB and encourage others in their community to take a pledge to not discriminate against or stigmatize anyone with TB.

During the event, organised by city-based NGO REACH, which has been dedicated to the fight against TB for two decades, Ms Suhasini recalled how she dealt with TB, which affected her twice.

Referring to herself as a living example of how one could move on with their lives after being cured of TB, Ms Suhasini

Maniratnam recalled, "I would monitor my weight daily and make a note of it as I had drastically lost weight. My family took good care of me and ensured that I ate well. They played a huge role in my recovery."

She also spoke about the importance of taking such campaigns forward on social media. "We share our selfies and videos in one social media challenge or the other. We can use the power of social media and spread positive messages and take the anti-stigma campaign forward by pledging not to discriminate against a person with TB," she added.

People with TB and community volunteers present at the event reiterated their

commitment to working towards a TB free society. This year's World TB Day theme, observed on March 24 worldwide, is



'It's Time', indicating accelerated efforts to end the urgent need for TB.

Dr Nalini Krishnan, Director, REACH and Dr Ramya Ananthakrishnan, Executive Director, REACH also participated in the programme.

As part of the campaign, people with TB and REACH staff will be distributing awareness materials, including a

wrist band with the anti-stigma pledge. To join the campaign, call 9790977331.

REACH invites people to take a picture, selfie with the band, which will be distributed by REACH staff and people affected by TB, and people can send their support on the following mobile number.

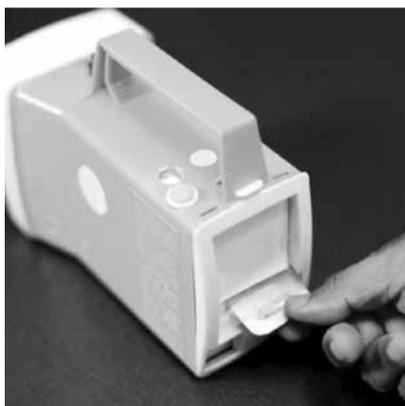
Pillbox-cum-adherence support device launched for TB patients

Chennai, March 23: Ahead of World TB Day, STAMP, a new pillbox-cum-treatment adherence support system, was launched at a meeting organised by REACH, a city-based NGO which is partnering with the government's TB control programme.

STAMP, an acronym for Support for Treatment Adherence and Medication Protocol, has been designed and manufactured by Sundaram Medical Devices (SMD), a Harvard Business School award winning startup based in Chennai. Patients can use the multi-function pillbox to dispense medication and assist them in completing their course of treatment successfully. 200 such devices were donated to REACH by the Sundaram Aaryogyam and Vitality Enhancement (SAVE) Foundation.

Speaking at the launch meeting, Mr N Krishnan, Managing Director of IMPAL, lauded the introduction of this device and said, "IMPAL is proud to have supported public health causes, including TB, for over several years, much before the CSR funding law came into existence."

These electronic medication dispensers (EMDs) have been in development since 2015 by SMD's team of engineers guided by doctors and experts at REACH. The device is programmed to remind the patient to take their medicine and has graded alerts to the patient, family members and healthcare workers, if the patient



forgets to take a dose. This helps TB patients adhere to the treatment and follow the drug regimen regularly. In addition to alerts, a secure live database on adherence is maintained for patient, doctor, and healthcare worker review and action.

Mr Krishna Mahesh, Director SMD said, "We wanted this to be a patient friendly, supportive and non-intrusive device, as simple as pressing a button. That's all people with TB should have to worry about. The technology itself should be invisible to them. We hope to make this device available globally for people affected by TB."

Since treatment for TB lasts six to eight months, the need for following up with a person's adherence is considered crucial to successful treatment completion. Without adhering to the treatment regimen, TB, a disease that kills around 1400 people in India everyday, cannot be cured and might develop drug resistance.

Dr Ramya Ananthakrishnan, Executive Director, REACH, said, "Treatment support mechanisms do exist but we wanted a device that would keep the needs of the patient front and centre. STAMP also helps our health workers optimize their time and become more efficient healthcare providers."

The STAMP project was piloted with REACH, which has been working with tuberculosis in the private sector for the past two decades. It has been helping implement the government's TB control programme in Chennai by engaging the private sector.

About the device

The pillbox unit first sounds an alarm at the time of taking medication. If medication is dispensed on time, a notification is sent to the servers and the patient's file is updated. If there is a delay of two hours in taking medication, a language appropriate SMS alert is sent to the patient's mobile phone. If the delay reaches four hours, an automated voice reminder is sent to the patient's mobile phone. After a delay of six hours, a family member whose mobile number is registered gets a reminder and after a delay of 8 hours, a healthcare worker is notified that the patient has missed the medication and further action can be initiated. These messages are available in four languages, the preference of which can be chosen by the patient at the time of registration.

BOOK ON ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS RELEASED



As part of the club's 90th year celebrations the history and legacy of the third oldest club in India, the Rotary Club of Madras, was put together in a book titled "Timeless Legacy" and was formally launched. Past and current members of the club came together for an interesting meeting where V. Sriram spoke about the parallel history of the club and growth of Madras from 1929.

N.K. Gopinath, former president of the club and

chairman and author of the book and archives committee said the Gymkhana club, the Rotary International headquarters in Evanston and local libraries were some of the main sources of old information.

Historian V. Sriram released the book and the first copy was received by Babu Peram, Rotary District Governor. The Department of Posts released a commemorative stamp for 90 years of the club on the occasion.