

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF  
TAMIL NADU AT THE INAUGURATION OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
ON AUTISM AT SRM IST AUDITORIUM, KANCHEEPURAM  
ON 28/06/2018 AT 11.00 AM**

**Anaivarukkum Kaalai Vanakkam**

**Dr. T.R. Paarivendhar  
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**Dr. N. Chandrababha  
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**Dr. P.Sathyanarayanan  
President, SRM Institute of Science & Technology**

**Dr. U. Ganapathy Sankar  
Dean, SRM College of Occupational Therapy**

**Distinguished Invitees**

**Teachers & Students**

**Ladies & Gentlemen**

I am happy to be here at the SRM Institute of Science and Technology for the inauguration of the National conference on Autism.

Autism is a neuro developmental condition that typically affects one's ability to socialize, communicate and interact with others. Impairment in socialization, language communication and occurrence of stereotyped repetitive behaviours is symptomatic of autism.

Autism is one of the fastest growing disability conditions all over the world, including in India. WHO's statistics reveal that the autism prevalence rate is estimated at 1 in 160 children.

To have a better awareness about autism the World Autism Awareness Day is observed in the first week of April. The objective is to end stigmatization of discrimination against those afflicted by autism. The UN General Assembly resolution passed in November, 2007 called for the observance of this day with a view towards bringing together all organizations who are engaged in research diagnosis and treatment of autism. The UN Secretary General Antonio Guterre has also given a call to be more understanding of the problems faced by autistic children and their families, by saying “let us all play a part in changing attitudes toward persons with autism and in recognizing their rights as citizens, who, like everyone else, are entitled to claim those rights and make decisions for their lives in accordance with their own will and preferences.”

There are 5 main types of autism. They are

1. Asperger’s syndrome:  
Those diagnosed with this syndrome have normal intelligence and language development but possess severely impaired social skills.
2. Pervasive developmental Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS):  
This disorder causes delays in development especially in communication skills and ability to use imagination.
3. Autistic Disorder:  
These young people have below average intelligence and symptoms include inability to communicate and a tendency to become fixated on certain things. They may also be extremely sensitive to certain sounds and react excessively.
4. Rett Syndrome:  
The symptoms of this syndrome include sleep problems, breathing difficulties and slow cognitive abilities.

5. Childhood Disintegrative Disorder:

This condition is rare and little research has been done. Research suggests that the neurobiology of the brain plays a significant factor in determining the nature of the seizures of the brain.

Since autism is a lifelong challenge, it is important to develop and practice effective coping strategies like preparing schedules to help the child understand the tasks that need to be completed and in which order.

Teaching social intervention could start with the basic requirement of non-verbal social skills and then working on developing skills to read facial expressions, gestures and verbal skills to communicate needs/wants, etc.

Early intervention programmes minimize and in some cases, prevent delays in development of infants and toddlers with disabilities.

Children whose special needs are identified and addressed during these crucial early years have a greater chance of reaching their full potential.

It's important to understand that autism is not a form of disease. The condition only reflects special and permanent emotional and psychological needs. Loving attention and a positive environment enhance their natural potential. These are the most valuable gifts parents can give to them. It is necessary to combine special and consistent attention by parent with personalised counseling by professionals. Parents should try to provide the child the best possible support.

It is also the duty of society at large to stand by such people. The autism incidence rate in India is increasing year by year and it is reported that approximately one in 68 children are affected by it. At least more than 70 million children worldwide are affected by autism of which 10 million are in India itself. Foundational skill treatment are successfully achieved through Occupational Therapy, which incorporates various treatments programs like Sensory Integration Therapy, Play Therapy, Behaviour Modification, Speech Therapy for communication development and Special Education for educating children with autism.

Governments at the Centre and State have made efforts to provide special services for persons with autism through Legislative framework and programs and schemes. Many NGOs across India and in particular, in Tamil Nadu are engaged in providing services to people with autism.

It is heartening to see that the SRM University has taken the lead in disseminating greater awareness about autism by organizing the National Conference on Autism. I am sure that this will spur on many more institutions to follow suit.

India has had a continuing civilization for more than 5000 years by following the path of sustainable development. Several challenges have been posed to the maintenance of equilibrium in Indian society. Solutions were provided by leading thinkers, philosophers and learned people from time to time. Though the causes of autism have not been fully understood, I am sure that conferences such as these will decipher them within a short span of time. Once the cause is understood a solution to prevent or at least mitigate the occurrence will not be far behind.

Life is a beautiful gift of God. We must learn to treasure it and use this special gift for the benefit of society.

Nandri                      Vanakkam

Jai                      Hind.