DHEERA: No To Violence Against Women

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No To Violence Against Women—to stop VAW is a responsibility of each one of us. When I had become a member of FIGO working group on No to Violence Against Women in 2016, I initiated DHEERA, a campaign to stop violence against women. My theme as President FOGSI is “FOGSI FOR ALL ALWAYS,” and “DHEERA—STOP VIOLENCE IN WOMEN” aiming to reach SDG-5. Violence against women is perhaps the most disgraceful human rights violation and probably the most prevalent one, and it is sad that the incidence has increased in this COVID pandemic. Nearly 38% of Indian women face violence in the hands of their partners. What we identify is only the tip of the iceberg with many more going undetected. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. It is the root cause of maternal

morbidity, reproductive coercion, poor physical, emotional and psychological health of women.

Role of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists—we are the specialist stakeholders of women’s health and occupy a unique position. We all have the responsibility toward providing quality care to our women, we are the first point of contact for their health and emotional needs, and access to assess and by the nature of the patient–physician relationship, provide support for women who experience violence. FOGSI—The Federation of Obstetrics & Gynaecological Societies of India is committed to rise, speak up, focus and partner with all the stakeholders—law, police, women, students, youngsters and men for taking it forward.

DHEERA 2016

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DHEERA conveys Courage, Conviction, Strength—ADVOCACY.

The main objective is to create awareness, advocacy and sensitization of self, fraternity, victims, male partners and people at large. Advocacy is by giving a call, making a noise, sounding a warning that VAW must STOP. The FOCUS is on ACTION.

Activities Under DHEERA

As Secretary of FOGSI ICOG & MEMBER FIGO WORKING GROUP ON No To VAW

We organized a PUBLIC FORUM CYCLATHON in 2016 at HICC with President FIGO, President FOGSI, ICOG Chairperson, Ms. Swati Lakra, IPS, SHE teams and BHAROSA, Smt. Lalitha Kumaramangalam, Hon'ble Chairperson, National Commission for Women, Dr. (Mrs.) Tripurana Venkataratnam, Chairperson, State Commission for Women, OGS members, Gynecologists, Students, 300 men, women and boys with a spontaneous participation raising slogans and holding placards. Colleges, IT sector, media and NGOs working for welfare of women took part in this initiative too. A page on social media was created to an enthusiastic and heart-warming response to take part in the initiative. As UN has identified orange color to say NO to VAW a call was given to “**Wear orange and say NO to VAW.**” Ms Lavanya Tripathi a young actor from Telugu film field flagged off the cyclathon. Hundreds of orange and white balloons were released to mark the occasion. Participants cycled with slogans to say NO to VAW. There was a Orange wave in the atmosphere spreading to the skies. The mood was upbeat, and the passion was strong. The hard reality was driven into everyone by the statistics on domestic violence or general

violence against women. There was a good coverage and well focused in print and electronic media.

DHEERA Marches on

DHEERA rolled on at the FOGSI-FIGO 2017 International Congress on Clinical Challenges in Obstetrics & Gynaecology 2017, Hyderabad, India. We organized a public Forum and bikethon in 2017 at HICC, Hyderabad. Honorable Shri. Anurag Sharma, IPS Director General of Police, Hyderabad flagged off the bikethon. A young cine actress and other eminent personalities took part in the public forum. Many doctors, youngsters, men and women from all walks of life participated in the bike rally and gave a call to Stop Violence Against Women (VAW). The special feature of this endeavor was making young men as partners in the campaign to say NO against VAW.

FLASH MOB: At the same forum, a flash mob depicting the effects of violence against women was enacted by the students of Osmania Medical College and repeated multiple times during the conference. Prof. C.N. Purandare—FIGO President, Dr. Carlos Fuchtnner (Bolivia)—FIGO President Elect, Professor Gian Carlo di Renzo (Italy)—Honorary Secretary FIGO, Prof. Paul Fogarty (UK)—RCOG, Dr. Diana Galimberti (Argentina)—Chair, FIGO Working Group had taken part with great enthusiasm in this event.

This was continued at various forums in the country including the North Zone YUVA FOGSI Conference in 2017. In Indore, September 2017, at the FOGSI conference a radio show and a walk were organized to focus on VAW.

WALKATHON—In 2018, at FOGSI ICOG National Conference on Principles Practices and Protocols at Hyderabad, DHEERA saw 600 gynecologists who walked the streets to stop VAW. The 2 km walkathon saw participation from all walks of life and was joined by actress Malavika Nair who urged people to stop and speak against VAW.

DHEERA 2017

At FIGO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AT RIO BRAZIL IN OCTOBER 2018 we launched DHEERA to the world.

FIGO declaration on NO TO VAW with WHO was signed at FIGO CONGRESS, Rio Brazil in 2018 and all member societies pledged support to NO TO VAW at the plenary session. Dr. Denis Mukwege the Nobel Laureate gave his

video message during the declaration which was indeed a proud moment for DHEERA campaign and India.

The DHEERA campaign and march at FIGO Congress on Stop VAW got wide publicity in Brazil media and FIGO tweeted, at #FIGO2018-health professionals from all over the world marched together to demonstrate our shared commitment to #EndVAW, and the march video was uploaded on YouTube youtu.be/Jh2Ec4-Cgzm.

As President FOGSI, I have launched the DHEERA Project this year.

DHEERA means “courage”

Power of being DHEERA Together

#dheeratogether – creating awareness in adolescents

DHEERA – SAY NO TO VAW - A FOGSI led initiative to combat Violence against Women in India

Pillar 1 Boys' group education alongside girls. DHEERA – ONLINE SCHOOL CERTIFICATION PROGRAMME	Pillar 2 Build capacities & sensitize health care professionals about the dynamics of VAW and how they can contribute to its reduction. WORK SHOPS /CMES FOR OBGYNs	Pillar 3 Group level interventions working with parents of school going (9 th – 12 th) children. DHEERA – ONLINE SCHOOL CERTIFICATION PROGRAMME	Pillar 4 Intensive community-level work and awareness – raising campaigns	Pillar 5 Engaging Government (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare / Ministry of Women and Child Development/Ministry of Education)
Role of NGOs, Police, Law, Governments	International professional organizations - FIGO, USAID, UN WOMEN	Women's commissions - NATIONAL & STATE WOMENS COMMISSIONS, Governments	Human rights organisations, Governments	

DHEERA—Online Certificate Course for Schools— VAW is a serious hindrance to women's health and SDG GOALS. DHEERA adds a new page to reach young boys and girls 9th to 12th standard as an online certification course in Collaboration with UNICEF through structured informative sessions by FOGSI Experts, which will go a long way in enabling the future generation to say NO to any Violence against Women.

DHEERA—Final goal—Engaging government (ministry of health and family welfare/ministry of women and child development/ministry of education) and making it mandatory and compulsory in the curriculum. This will go in a long way to sensitize young minds specially boys on VAW and pave way for a more gender neutral and equal communities.

PILLAR 2—Workshops/CME for GYNECOLOGISTS—Build capacities and sensitize health care providers/professionals about the dynamics of abuse/VAW and how they can contribute to its reduction.

1. **VAW and Women's Health—**How does it intersect Women's Health? Effects of VAW on Pregnancy and New born.
2. **VAW—Sexual aspects—**Rape/Sexual assault. How should a gynaecologist approach a survivor of sexual assault—examination and collection of evidence? medico legal aspects, guidelines and protocols.
3. **Rehabilitation of survivor—**social, financial and mental health—long term sequelae.
4. **How to create VAW free communities—**work as a team, work in tandem.

LIMITS ONLY EXIST IN OUR MIND, IN REALITY WITH HARD WORK AND DEDICATION WE CAN ACHIEVE ALL THE DREAMS!

I am sure if we are committed to Women's health, together we can eradicate this menace of VAW from the society.

Dear friends we are 38,000 gynaecologists taking care of Women's health in India we can definitely make a difference if we address this social evil of VAW and make our country a safer place for Women. TOGETHER WE CAN

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About the Author

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