

NIN - A BRIEF PROFILE

The National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) founded in the year 1918, is the premier nutrition research institute of the country which functions under the aegis of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). The Institute carries out need-based research in both basic and applied aspects of nutrition science and assists governmental and other agencies in the effective control and eradication of nutrition-related problems.

Research is the main forte of NIN. The research work carried out in the clinic, laboratory and community is closely integrated. Emphasis is laid on problem oriented research with a view to finding out effective, practical, economically viable and sustainable solutions to a plethora of nutrition-related problems affecting the people.

The Institute is located on a picturesque campus with spacious buildings, surrounded by vast stretches of lush green lawns and trees. It is adequately equipped with a range of sophisticated state-of-the-art equipment and systems along with the necessary infrastructural facilities to aid nutrition research.

The Institute plays a key role in the formulation of several National Nutrition Programmes and in devising strategies to accomplish the goals spelt out in the National Nutrition Policy. The Institute's research endeavours were responsible for the implementation of two major national nutrition programmes aimed at controlling vitamin A deficiency and iron deficiency anaemia which are widely prevalent in the community.

The Institute's strength lies in the dedicated and committed teams of scientists and supporting staff. The scientists belong to diverse disciplines such as medicine, paediatrics, obstetrics and gynaecology, biochemistry, pathology, community health, social sciences, dietetics, statistics, communication and other related areas.

The Institute's library, which is a huge storehouse of nutrition-related information, is well stacked with books, periodicals and journals and is considered to be one of the finest scientific libraries in India. In addition, latest computer facilities assist in storage, analysis and retrieval of relevant information.

The Institute has been recognised by many national and international organizations as a nodal centre for conducting advanced as well as ad-hoc training courses in nutrition and

laboratory animal sciences. In addition, many reputed Universities have recognised NIN as a centre for Ph.D. programmes in several disciplines.

The judicious mix of mass media, interpersonal communication, traditional folk media and printed literature forms the backbone of the Institute's extension work. The Institute's books and periodicals enjoy immense popularity among masses. A 'Nutrition Museum', depicting posters, charts and models on health and nutrition is a centre of attraction to the visitors, who come from diverse backgrounds.

The Institute houses the three other ICMR Centres located on the campus viz., Food and Drug Toxicology Research Centre (FDTRC), National Centre for Laboratory Animal Sciences (NCLAS) and the National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB).

FDTRC comprises two units -Food Toxicology and Drug Toxicology. Research investigations pertaining to food safety as well as toxicology form the main activity of Food Toxicology Unit. Naturally occurring toxins like mycotoxins and chemical toxins such as pesticide residues, heavy metals and food additives are studied here. In addition, the epidemiological investigations on toxicity occurring due to food contaminants are also undertaken here and remedial measures for their control are suggested. The Drug Toxicology unit of FDTRC undertakes research studies in the areas of bio-availability, Pharmacokinetics, metabolism and toxicity of drugs and is a recognised preclinical toxicology testing centre. It also conducts studies on nutrient-drug interaction and nutrition- cancer interrelationships.

NCLAS, a yet another ICMR institute on the campus supplies good quality, specific pathogen free, microbiologically and genetically defined animals for biomedical research and drug testing and develops 'novel' animal models for human diseases.

NNMB collects, on a continuous basis, data on dietary intakes and nutritional status population groups from different regions of the country .It also evaluates the on-going national nutrition programmes and suggests remedial measures for their effective functioning. The data generated by the Bureau is used by both national and international organisations for the formulation of policy guidelines and for large-scale intervention programmes of public health importance.

The research findings of the Institute are published in reputed national and international journals. Innumerable prestigious honours and awards have also been conferred on Institute's scientists for the outstanding achievement in their research field.

Some of the significant achievements made over the decades in several areas of nutrition research are:

- Determining dietary requirements and nutritive value of Indian foods;
- Nutrition for mother and child;
- Protein energy malnutrition;
- Micronutrient deficiency disorders;
- Chronic die-related disorders;
- Nutrition and xenobiotics;
- Food safety, contaminants and adulterants;
- Nutrition monitoring and surveillance of communities;
- Nutrition extension and training;
- New animal models for chronic diseases;
- Consultancy services to national and international bodies.

Interdisciplinary research and multisectoral coordination between governmental and non-governmental agencies and international organisations are the hallmarks of NIN's research philosophy. NIN, with its commitment to further nutritional upliftment of people, is constantly engaged in pursuing action-oriented nutrition research. The new millennium brings in a new set of challenges. Geriatric Nutrition, Genetically Modified Foods, Therapeutic Diets, Sports Nutrition, Nutrition Surveillance, Constant reassessment of existing Recommended Dietary Allowances for Indians and Innovative IEC Strategies are a few newer thrust areas identified here for future research.