Winter Dialogue Series on Responsible AI for Synergistic Excellence in Healthcare (RAISE) 2026

A Four-City Initiative Advancing Health AI Governance in India

The Winter Dialogue series on Responsible AI for Synergistic Excellence in Healthcare (RAISE) convened across four Indian cities throughout January 2026, is an official Pre-Summit Event of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, the Government of India's landmark initiative under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to establish India as a global leader in responsible AI innovation and governance. Recognising healthcare as a critical sector where AI deployment intersects with fundamental questions of equity, access, and human dignity, the RAISE series was designed to generate sector-specific insights and policy recommendations that would directly inform the National AI Strategy discussions at the Summit. Co-organised by the Koita Centre for Digital Health at Ashoka University and NIMS University, Rajasthan, Jaipur, the initiative established a comprehensive platform for multi-stakeholder engagement, bringing together researchers, policymakers, clinicians, industry leaders, and civil society organisations to address the complex challenges of deploying AI technologies responsibly in healthcare contexts.

The series drew support from multiple institutions committed to advancing responsible health innovation, including the Gates Foundation and ICMR-NIRDHS, while benefiting from technical expertise provided by the WHO South-East Asia Regional Office. This alignment with the India AI Impact Summit ensured that the dialogue outcomes would contribute to shaping national policy frameworks, regulatory standards, and implementation roadmaps that balance innovation with patient safety, clinical efficacy, and equitable access across India's diverse healthcare landscape.

Sonipat Dialogue: Foundations of Health AI Policy and Governance

The inaugural session took place on January 5-6, 2026, at Ashoka University in Sonipat, organised and hosted by the Koita Centre for Digital Health at Ashoka University (KCDH-A). The event benefited from technical hosting by the WHO South-East Asia Regional Office (WHO SEARO), with additional support from ICMR-NIRDHS and the Gates Foundation. KCDH-A led the conceptualisation and execution of this foundational session, focusing the discussion on the critical theme: Health AI Policy and Governance.

Somak Raychaudhury, Vice-Chancellor of Ashoka University, emphasised multidisciplinary research as essential infrastructure for responsible AI development. Dr Karthik Adapa, Regional Advisor for Digital Health at WHO, identified a persistent challenge facing the field: "pilotitis", the chronic failure to scale digital health solutions beyond initial demonstrations. He stressed the need for comprehensive frameworks like SALIENT that guide AI integration from problem definition through large-scale trials. Dr Sanjay Pattanshetty, Director of NIMS, underscored the imperative of translating academic evidence into actionable insights through collaborative platforms.

Anurag Agrawal, Head of KCDH-A and Dean of Trivedi School of Biosciences, framed a provocative question that resonated throughout the event: "Would you choose a model with higher accuracy or one with lower accuracy that shows equity in outcomes?" This question encapsulated the central tension the series aimed to address, advancing AI sciences responsibly by prioritising "AI for Health, not Healthcare for AI."

The mental health panel revealed particularly nuanced challenges. Dr Prabha Chand from NIMHANS observed that large language models are "optimised for engagement, not clinical outcomes," while Dr Smruti Joshi emphasised that "mental health judgment cannot be fully automated." Panellists, including Ms Punita Mittal from SoulUp, explored how AI can support lay counsellors and community health workers while maintaining transparency, ensuring automated systems identify themselves rather than mimic human interaction.

Case studies presented during evaluation and validation sessions showcased deployments ranging from TB screening and cancer detection to maternal monitoring systems operating across Indian states. Dr Mary-Anne Hartley presented MOOVE India's framework for clinically validated AI adapted to Indian settings, emphasising a fundamental principle: imperfect data yields imperfect models. Dr Gokul Krishnan from CeRAI at IIT Madras noted that bias is often contextual and invisible, necessitating context-specific evaluation frameworks rather than universal standards.

A closing fireside chat between Professor Chetan Arora from IIT Delhi and Dr Jitendar Saini from NIMHANS examined practical implementation barriers, highlighting that every hospital operates with unique workflows. The discussion revealed a critical gap: the lack of incentives for digitising records, particularly affecting frontline workers like nurses who perform essential data entry but receive no recognition for this additional burden.

Several consistent themes crystallised across panels: the critical need for stakeholder alignment in scaling AI solutions; designing for equity and inclusivity from inception rather than as afterthoughts; treating explainability as a clinical requirement rather than a technical feature; and ensuring accountability frameworks exist before large-scale deployment. Speakers repeatedly emphasised that adoption challenges often outweigh technical accuracy concerns, and that scaling without safeguards can amplify existing health inequities rather than reduce them.

Delhi Dialogue: Global Health and AI Diplomacy

The second edition unfolded on January 12-13, 2026, at IIT Delhi's Research and Innovation Park, hosted by NIMS University, Rajasthan, in partnership with IIT Delhi, shifting focus to Global Health and AI Diplomacy. The sessions explored multilateralism in AI governance, AI-enabled care pathways, and population-level implementation strategies. Supported by organisations including DAKSHIN-Global South Centre of Excellence at RIS, Apollo Hospitals, UNICEF, and the Asian Development Bank, the dialogue emphasised India's positioning in global health AI leadership, with NIMS Institute of Public Health and Governance bringing critical expertise in translating health AI research into policy frameworks for implementation

The event featured the launch of "Health Diplomacy Futures: Capacity Building in the Global South," a report addressing capacity gaps in AI governance across developing nations. Panels examined how digital public infrastructure like Aadhaar and ABDM positions India uniquely for AI innovation, while addressing concerns about data sovereignty, federated learning models, and ensuring marginalised populations aren't excluded from digitisation efforts. Discussions on maternal and child health governance highlighted ethical dimensions of AI deployment in vulnerable populations.

The inaugural ceremony included addresses from Prof. Balvir S Tomar, Dr. Sanjay Pattanshetty, Ms. Nande Putta, Chief of Health at UNICEF, Sean Blaschke, Dr. Gaurav Singh, CEO of Blockchain for Impact. Additional sessions addressed climate-resilient health with Dr. Aparna Chaudhary from Wadhwani AI, Dr. Raj Shankar Ghosh from Public Health Foundation of India, Dr. Swati Mahajan from PATH, Dr. Ashrita Saran from Global Development Network, and Dr. K Madan Gopal from NHSRC, moderated by Ms. Chehak Ahuja from CEEW. The valedictory ceremony featured Ms. Elisabeth Strand Vigtel, Counsellor for Science, Technology and Higher Education at the Norwegian Embassy, Ms. Leena Arora Kukreja, Science and Technology Counsellor at the Embassy of Switzerland, and Mr. Nico Schiettekatte, Counselor for Health, Welfare & Sport at the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Bengaluru Dialogue: Emerging Technologies in Biomedicine

The third session, held January 16-17, 2026, brought together NCBS and C-CAMP in Bengaluru as partner institutions for exploring fundamental research questions at the intersection of AI and biology. Prof. LS Shashidhara, Director of NCBS, delivered the inaugural talk on "AI for Biology and Biology for AI."

Day one's scientific sessions examined AI's role in accelerating discoveries across genomics, structural biology, biomedical imaging, ecology, and neuroscience. Researchers, including Prof. Shaon Chakrabarti from NCBS, Prof. Ramray Bhat from IISc, Prof. Vishwesha Guttal from IISc, and Prof. Upinder Singh Bhalla from NCBS, led discussions on protein language models, multi-scale imaging challenges, environmental DNA analysis, and brain-inspired AI architectures. A recurring emphasis centred on data quality, biological interpretability, and understanding when and why AI models succeed.

Day two shifted to health innovation, with Dr Taslimarif Saiyed, CEO of C-CAMP, providing opening remarks on C-CAMP's contributions to AI-driven entrepreneurship. Panels featured innovators including Ms Laina Emmanuel from Brainsight AI, Mr Sreekar Kothamachu from Nesa MedTech, Mr Chandrashekhar K from Forus Health, and Dr Bhavin Vadera from JHPIEGO, discussing diagnostics, therapeutics, screening technologies, and democratisation through digital public goods. Discussions emphasised moving from pilot to scale through deployment-first mindsets, human-centric design, and partnerships bridging public and private sectors to ensure equitable healthcare access.

Hyderabad Dialogue: Healthtech and AI - Transforming Healthcare Delivery through intelligent, accessible and human-centred technologies

The final session on January 20, 2026, partnered with IIIT Hyderabad to focus on HealthTech and AI entrepreneurship. The single-day intensive dialogue is structured around three critical themes: opportunities for AI-powered healthcare innovation, building healthcare startups, and scaling health AI globally.

The opening sessions examined reimagining clinical workflows and the shift toward preventive care. Dr Sridhar Prahalad from UNICEF and Dr Chinna Babu Sunkavalli, Founder and CEO of Grace Cancer Foundation, addressed how AI can transform community health from reactive treatment to proactive wellness monitoring, exploring the role of digital public health platforms and wearables in data-driven care delivery.

The sessions examined translating research into viable startups and addressing the persistent data collaboration challenge. Kiran Chandra, Founder of Swecha, moderated discussions on barriers to commercialisation and the role of incubation ecosystems in accelerating HealthTech journeys. Prof. Raja Poladi from IIIT Hyderabad led a panel on "The Data Conundrum," featuring Dr Gayatri Kamineni, Director and COO of Kamineni Hospitals, and Dr Vimee Bindra, Gynaecologist at Apollo Hospitals, addressing critical questions about clinical collaboration challenges, data infrastructure gaps, and the tension between data utility and privacy under India's DPDP framework. The discussion explored how hospitals currently manage patient data, what structural and cultural barriers hinder collaboration between healthcare providers and HealthTech startups, and the potential of federated learning approaches.

The dialogue concluded with sessions on global scaling and responsible AI deployment. The final panel on trust, compliance, and ethics brought together Prof. Sri Krishna Deva Rao, Vice Chancellor of NALSAR, Kiran Chandra from Swecha, and Dr Suvrankar Dutta, Faculty Fellow at Ashoka University, exploring how startups can operationalise principles like fairness, explainability, and human-in-the-loop design while balancing rapid international expansion with ethical responsibility and long-term credibility.

Looking Forward

The RAISE series successfully established an ongoing platform for dialogue between academia, industry, government, and civil society on responsible AI governance in health systems. As Dr Sanjay Pattanshetty observed, "The promise of responsible AI is realised when evidence moves beyond the lab. Universities must lead in translating research into societal, ethical, and policy outcomes that guide AI for the common good." The initiative demonstrated that responsible AI deployment requires not just technical excellence, but sustained cross-sector collaboration, contextual understanding, and unwavering commitment to equity and patient safety across the entire lifecycle from research and development through global commercialisation.