

# Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance

## Public Engagement Report

2009-15

# India Alliance Public Engagement Report 2009-15

“Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit” – National Co-ordinating Center for Public Engagement, UK

Besides its Fellowship Programme, the Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance aims to bring the scientific community and the public together to share, debate and deliberate on important scientific and human health matters that have significant implications on the society at large. It recognizes the importance for scientists to engage with the public to increase their awareness of science, technology and medicine (STM) research, and themselves get societal perspectives on their research towards a larger picture. To fulfill this vision, India Alliance has organized various public events in different Indian cities. It has also initiated a Public Engagement competition for its Fellows to interact with society at large about their work. This report gives an overview of all the Public Engagement activities of India Alliance since its inception.

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## 2012 ‘Unseen’: a three-day public event focused on mental ability

The India Alliance held its first Public Engagement event in Kolkata from December 18-20, 2012 in association with Manovikas Kendra, an organization working on special education for physically and intellectually challenged children and young adults. Titled ‘Unseen’, the event focused on mental ability through the popular medium of documentaries, short films and theatre as well as interactions with experts from different parts of the world. The event was held at GD Birla Sabhagar, Kolkata.

The films presented at the event were curated by psychiatrist and renowned film-theater personality Dr Mohan Agashe; acclaimed German Director, Mr Gregor Kern of the popular short film festival on disability, ‘The way we live’, held in Munich; and the noted film curator Mr SV Raman. In addition to the film-screenings, the other programs at the event included a performance “I am half of who I am” by Mr Andrew Dawson, a Wellcome Trust Public engagement grant holder; a talk titled, “Why scientists don’t own your brain”, by Dr Daniel Glaser, head of the special projects in Public Engagement at the Wellcome Trust, UK; and a public lecture by Dr Mohan Agashe on “Cinema as a diet for mental ability”.

‘Unseen’ was a novel public engagement event organized by the India Alliance, which attempted to address questions with regards to mental retardation and associated syndromes. The short films screened at the event showcased the differing realities of disabled persons, whereas the interaction focused on why the public should be sensitive to the needs, challenges and lives of such persons. Enthusiastic audience participation suggested that India Alliance succeeded in raising awareness and initiating a discussion on disability. Click [here](#) to read the full report.

unaware  
unintentional  
disbelief  
not  
discontent  
unappreciated  
invisible

The Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance  
in association with Manovikas Kendra presents

# unseen

unblock  
misinform  
unknown  
mismanage  
disadvantage  
misinterpret  
distrust  
unequal  
unfriendly  
mispeak  
mistake  
disallow  
disappear  
unloved  
misbelief  
underachiever  
misunderstood  
disability  
disagree  
disagree

**focus on mental ability**  
DOCUMENTARIES-THEATRE-INTERACTION  
18•19•20 December 2012

**Screenings**  
GD Birla Sabhagar  
18-20 December 2012  
4 pm onwards

**I am half of who I am**  
Performance by  
Andrew Dawson, UK  
GD Birla Sabhagar  
18 December 2012  
4:30 pm

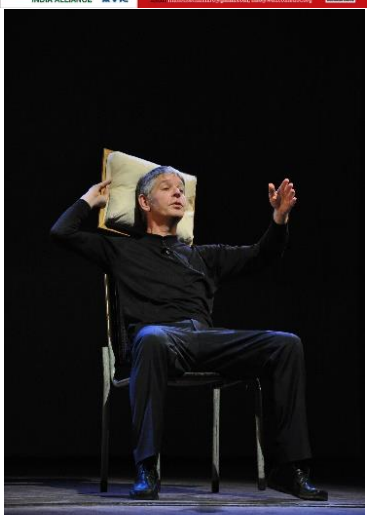
**Interactions**  
Dr Mohan Agashe,  
Dr Daniel Glaser,  
Speakers and  
Moderators from  
Manovikas Kendra  
GD Birla Sabhagar  
19 December 2012  
4:30 pm

**Documentaries Directed By**  
Dr SV Raman  
Dr Gregor Kern  
Dr Daniel Glaser, UK  
GD Birla Sabhagar  
19 December 2012

**Chief Guest**  
Dr SV Raman  
Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India

**Organized by**  
Manovikas Kendra  
Kolkata, West Bengal  
in association with  
GD Birla Sabhagar

**India Alliance**  
Wellcome Trust DBT India Alliance



# Public Lecture Series

India Alliance organizes several public lectures at various institutions across India, to give those interested in science an opportunity to interact with eminent scientists from around the world. Such engagement raises the level of scientific discourse and helps develop scientific temper in India.

## 2013-14 'Evolution of the Human Mind'

The first Public Lecture Series in 2013-14 was in the broad area of "Evolution of the Human Mind" in the month of November and December, 2013. Seven invited speakers delivered 12 lectures at different intellectual forums in 8 cities across the country. Click [here](#) to read the reports for all the lectures and the [schedule](#).

Speakers for 'Evolution of the Human Mind' Public Lecture Series included: Prof Carel van Schaik (*University of Zurich, Switzerland*), Prof Thomas Metzinger (*Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, Germany*), Prof Tetsuro Matsuzawa (*Director of the Primate Research Institute of Kyoto University, Japan*), Prof Andrew Meltzoff (*Co-Director of the Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences, University of Washington, Seattle, USA*), Prof Patricia Kuhl (*Co-Director of the Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences, University of Washington, Seattle, USA*), Dr Nicholas Humphrey (*University of Cambridge, UK*), and Prof Ajit Varki (*Glycobiology Research and Training Center, University of California, San Diego, USA*).

Click [here](#) to watch the video clips from the lecture series.



## 2014-15 'DNA@70'

India Alliance is currently celebrating the discovery of DNA as a hereditary molecule through a series of public lectures in various cities. The first two lectures were given by Prof W Ian Lipkin (*Center for Infection and Immunity, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, USA*) and Prof Nadrian Seeman (*Margaret and Herman Sokol Professor of Chemistry, New York University, USA*). Planned lectures include those by Dr Karen Nelson (*President, J Craig Venter Institute, Rockville, USA*) in March 2015 and by Prof Shankar Balasubramanian (*University of Cambridge, UK*) in June 2015.

**DNA@70**

**DNA: Not Merely the Secret of Life**

The lecture will cover the origins and developments of the new field of DNA Nanotechnology. This uses information coded in synthetic DNA molecules to build objects, crystals and nanoparticles.

**New Delhi**  
December 22, 2014 at 6:30 PM  
India International Centre, Max Mueller Marg

**Hyderabad**  
December 29, 2014 at 11:00 AM  
CSIR ICT Auditorium, Taramaka  
(in collaboration with IISc Hyderabad Chapter and IIT Academy of Sciences)

**Kolkata**  
December 31, 2014 at 11:30 AM  
Bose Institute Main Campus, Raja Bazar  
(in collaboration with Bose Institute)

**Shantiniketan**  
January 2, 2015 at 3:00 PM  
Science Faculty Auditorium,  
Visva Bharati University

**DR. NADRIAN SEEMAN**  
Ph.D.  
Margaret and Herman Sokol  
Professor of Chemistry  
New York University, USA

**DNA@70**

**Small Game Hunting**  
*disease control in the genome era*

This lecture will provide a comprehensive review of pathogen discovery, microbiome research and zoonotic diseases. The speaker is a celebrated scientist who applies novel technology to discovering the causes of human and animal disease.

**June 19, 2014**  
11:00 AM

Bangalore Science Forum Auditorium  
National Pre University College  
Basavanagudi  
Bangalore

**W. IAN LIPKIN, MD**  
Professor of Epidemiology, Mailman School of Public Health  
Professor of Neurology and Pathology  
College of Physicians and Surgeons  
Director, Center for Infection and Immunity  
Columbia University, New York, USA

**DNA@70**

**The Zoo in You**  
*Human Microbiome in Health & Disease*

The human microbiome refers to microbes (bacteria, viruses and fungi) that inhabit the human body, changes to which are implicated in several diseases, including cancer, autism and other chronic disorders. This lecture will explore causation versus correlation, the impact of environment on the microbiome and differences in human microbiome populations based on geographic locations.

**Pune**  
March 11, 2015 at 3:30 PM  
National Centre for Cell Sciences (NCCS)  
Pune University Campus, Ganeshkhind  
(in collaboration with NCCS and IISc)

**New Delhi**  
March 12, 2015 at 3:30 PM  
National Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, Aruna Asaf Ali Marg  
New Delhi (JNU Campus)

**DR. KAREN NELSON**  
Ph.D.  
President  
J. Craig Venter Institute, Rockville, USA

## Other India Alliance-sponsored Public Lectures

2013 The India Alliance in association with the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) conducted two public lectures at ICGEB on 17 December, 2013. Prof Robin Weiss (*University College, London, UK*) lectured on 'Pseudoviruses in Cell Biology and Vaccinology' and Dr Wayne Koff (Senior Vice President and Chief Scientific Officer, IAVI, New York, USA) talked on the 'Human Vaccines Project'.

2014 The India Alliance sponsored a talk by Padma Bhushan VS Ramachandran (*University of California, San Diego USA*) on January 7, 2014 at St Xavier's College, Mumbai, which was attended by more than 300 students, teachers, scientists and the general public.

## 2014 **Public Engagement competition for Fellows:** *connecting research with society*

To enable its Fellows to effectively and creatively engage with the society, the India Alliance announced its first rolling 'Public Engagement competition' in May 2014. This competition serves as a valuable opportunity for our Fellows to showcase and share their science with the public and collaborate with society at large. The engagement can be through research, social activities, creative pedagogies, short science movies/documentary and other modes of knowledge sharing with the central goal of educating and improving public awareness of science and human health issues.



*FIRST AWARD* India Alliance granted the first Public Engagement award in February 2015 to its Intermediate Fellow, Dr Mukund Thattai (NCBS, Bangalore), for his project titled 'Bodystorm hits Bangalore'.

### *Project Description*

*by Dr Mukund Thattai and his team*

The aim of **Bodystorm hits Bangalore** is to bring this approach between science and dance to Bangalore, which is an ideal space with its vibrant dance and science environment. The company Black Label Movement (BLM) and Prof Odde will visit NCBS for 10 days, to engage with scientists on the campus and with local dancers from the surrounding area.

The key elements of the program are:

- An initial workshop about the principles of Bodystorming (25-30 dancers selected through a comprehensive application process from local dance companies).
- Selection of 10 dancers for an immersive engagement of a one week residency at NCBS
- Extended engagement of the selected dancers with scientists at NCBS and work on a few clear projects to be presented publicly
- Develop the capacity to continue with this practice within the Bangalore science and dance community

*Organisers: Darius Koester, Mukund Thattai (NCBS), Aparna Banerjee (Science & Society Program NCBS), David Odde (University of Minnesota, USA), Carl Flink (University of Minnesota and Black Label Movement)*

**David Odde & Black Label Movement**

## 2015 ‘Voices for Cancer- YOUR role in prevention’: *panel discussion*

‘Voices for Cancer’ panel discussion was held at Miranda House, Delhi, on February 17, 2015, with the aim to inform and encourage students to play an active role in cancer prevention - to discuss how we can bridge the gap between the public and their access to key health information on cancer, how effective communication and public engagement can remove the stigma attached to it and finally, how different stakeholders and most importantly the public (the students!) could play an important role in cancer prevention. The event was organised in collaboration with RTI International, Public Health Foundation of India and Miranda House.

The diverse panel comprised of Mr Dinesh Sharma (*Science author and columnist*), Dr Kanchan Kaur (*Breast Cancer specialist, Medanta Hospital*), Ms Rita Bhalla (*President, Jagriti, the Cancer Awareness Section of Indian Cancer Society*), young cancer survivors, Chandan Kumar and Ritu Bhalla who work at the cancer NGO Cankids and Ms Priti Sayeed, the mother of a cancer survivor. A wide range of issues related to cancer risk perception and prevention were deliberated at this event with personal anecdotes from Priti Sayeed, Chandan Kumar and Ritu Bhalla forming the perfect backdrop for discussions. The panel and the audience collectively felt the importance of recognizing cancer as a widespread but treatable disease if detected early. It emphasized the need for all the stakeholders to come together to tackle the challenges currently facing cancer prevention in India. Click [here](#) to read the full report.

