

HSTP - HEALTH JOURNALISM FELLOWSHIP 2022

Media has an important role in mainstreaming the discourse on health systems and making it a social and political priority beyond times of crisis. The recent pandemic provided additional evidence of the role of media in advancing the conversation on issues of healthcare and public health.

To understand from the journalists about their experiences and challenges in covering aspects of the Indian health system, Health Systems Transformation Platform's (HSTP) organised a webinar titled '**Health Journalism in India - Silence of the Stories**' in March 2022. In the webinar the participants drew attention to issues that restrict reporting of health systems in the Indian media, ways for incentivizing public health journalism through awards and recognition and the need for introducing fellowship programmes to support young journalists for coverage of health systems. ([Webinar Report](#))

Based on the discussion in the webinar, HSTP started the '**HSTP - Health Journalism Fellowship**' programme in August 2022. The purpose was to provide five young journalists with a learning opportunity on healthcare and health systems issues and encourage them to critically investigate public health issues. The objectives of the fellowship programme were to:

- build a bridge between the public health community and the media.
- improve coverage of healthcare and health systems issues in the media.
- offer a learning opportunity to journalists on healthcare and health systems issues.



A group of five women are standing in a modern office or meeting room. They are positioned in front of a large white banner that features the HSTP logo and the text 'Health Systems Transformation Platform'. The women are dressed in professional attire, including blouses, dresses, and a kurta. The room has a grey carpet and a white ceiling with recessed lighting.

The eligibility criteria for the fellowship were journalists (full-time/part-time/freelancer) working with print/digital media organisations, having a minimum of two years of experience with an established record of publishing in English or any Indian vernacular language, graduated from any discipline, and are Indian citizens under the age of 32 years.

The fellowship was for a six-month period and offered a grant of INR 1,00,000 per fellow for the duration of the fellowship. The programme was designed in a manner which included orientation training, mentoring the fellows, capacity-building and guidance from subject matter experts, policymakers, and senior journalists.

Each of them would be working on three stories which combine investigative and on-the-ground reporting, and data journalism.

The fellowship programme was advertised on the HSTP website, social media handles, and other websites and shared with the journalism schools, and journalists of mainstream print/digital media organisations. Applications were received from across India. Five journalists were selected through a review of their proposed story idea and an online interview by a Advisory cum Selection Committee consisting of public health practitioners, academician, and senior journalist who guide the overall programme.

Advisory cum Selection Committee

- Prof. Rama V Baru, Professor, Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
- Ms. Rema Nagarajan, Journalist, Times of India, New Delhi
- Mr. Sunil Nandraj, Advisor, HSTP
- Ms. Pallavi Gupta, Specialist, Health Systems Governance, HSTP, New Delhi



Orientation Training, 20 - 21 October 2022

As part of the fellowship programme a two-day workshop was organised at the HSTP Office, New Delhi from the **20th to 21st October 2022** to provide fellows guidance from the subject matter experts, former bureaucrats, policymakers, and senior journalists. The areas covered were introduction to India's health system with a focus on governance and financing, sources of health information in India, education and professional practice of AYUSH, overview of Right to Information Act, healthcare of disadvantaged groups (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and allies) and public health reporting.

In the following months, the fellows will be working on their proposed three stories. Online capacity-building workshops will also be organised, and the fellows will be mentored and provided guidance. The HSTP – Health Journalism Fellowship expects to increase public discussion of healthcare and health systems issues and better coverage of these issues in the print and digital media and create a network in the journalism community and motivate young journalists.

Sessions were taken by the below resource persons:

- Prof. Rama V Baru, Professor, Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
- Dr. DC Katoch, Senior Chief Medical Officer – Ayurveda, Central Government Health Scheme, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India
- Dr. Tarun Seem, Commissioner of Income Tax, Indian Revenue Service, Government of India
- Ms. Rema Nagarajan, Journalist, Times of India, New Delhi
- Mr. Pranay Lal, Senior Technical Advisor – International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease
- Ms. Priya M Menon, Times of India, Features Editor, Times of India
- Mr. Rajeev Sadanandan, CEO, HSTP
- Mr. Sunil Nandraj, Advisor, HSTP
- Dr. Pratheeba John, Technical Specialist, HSTP



Meet the Fellows



Ms. Aishwarya Mohanty
Bhubaneswar, Odisha

Her story idea is titled '**Lack of healthcare access for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in Odisha,**' aims to investigate the difficulties in accessing healthcare and community understanding of health and health-related issues by interacting with the PVTGs community in Odisha.

Ms. Padmaja Jayaraman
Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Her story idea is titled '**Access to healthcare by a trans person is not a bed of roses in Chennai**' and aims to bring out the voice of trans people in the healthcare system, and their struggles in accessing general and mental healthcare in Chennai.



Ms. Azeefa Fathima
Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

Her story idea is titled '**Access denied**' and aims to investigate the multiple layers of health issues faced by sex workers, transgenders and intersex children.



Ms. Sneha Richhariya
Noida, Uttar Pradesh

Her story idea is titled '**Struggle for an eye: An acid attack survivor's journey to regain vision**' and aims to discuss systemic health issues that acid attack survivors face to regain their vision and also explore skin scarring, mental health concerns and medical accessibility for survivors.



Ms. Taran Kaur Deol, Gurgaon, Haryana

Her story idea is titled '**The state of Ayurveda in India**', and focuses on the state of Ayurveda education and practice, and how the drug regulation for Ayurveda has evolved over the years.