Meeting at the AABB Head Office in Washington DC

On the invitation of the AABB Chief Executive, Ms. Miriam Markowitz, the SBTP National Coordinator paid a visit to the AABB Head Office in Bethesda, MD on August 26, 2016. AABB was represented in the meeting by its Chief Executive, Vice President Naynesh Kamani and other AABB experts. Prof. Zaheer made a detailed interactive presentation to introduce the Pakistan Programme including its background, objectives, achievements, experiences, challenges and plans for the future. The interactive presentation was very keenly followed and appreciated by the AABB team and generated very insightful discussion.

The AABB Chief Executive proposed collaboration between AABB and the Pakistan’s Blood Programme to establish a scientific journal on behalf of Pakistan, using AABB resources and expertise associated with the AABB journal, ‘Transfusion’. The purpose of this collaboration would be to develop a journal for promoting and publishing Transfusion Medicine and Cellular Therapy papers on the sector developments in Pakistan for the benefit of the national and international scientific and clinical communities. The proposed bi-annual Journal will be published on the existing AABB publishing model as a unique supplement of Transfusion ___ a dedicated Pakistan edition of the AABB ‘Transfusion’ journal.

Other areas of collaboration including strengthening of haemovigilance in Pakistan, developing statistical models of different aspects of transfusion service in Pakistan, capacity building and joint R&D projects were also discussed. The AABB team highly appreciated the exciting developments in the field of blood transfusion in Pakistan and congratulated the Programme leadership for its commitment and amazing achievements.

Operationalization of Regional Blood Centre, Peshawar

The SBTP Regional Blood Centre established in the Hayatabad Medical Complex has become operational. Secretary Health KPK recently visited the RBC and inspected the smooth functioning of the modern Center which is equipped by latest technology and managed by a customized MIS. The RBC collects blood donations in mobile settings and in the Center after motivating and mobilizing voluntary blood donors. The collected blood is processed, tested, screened; blood components prepared and stored under appropriate conditions. The prepared blood components are then provided to the six linked hospital blood banks which have been equipped and upgraded through the project.

Recently the AABB and SBTP leadership has had frequent interaction in various international meetings which provided opportunities for useful exchange of views and experiences. A meeting was also held in August in the AABB Headquarters in Bethesda, MD in which the AABB team was briefed in detail about the developments in Pakistan’s BT sector. Among other things, the two organizations agreed to collaborate and bring out a bi-annual Pakistan specific edition of the AABB journal ‘Transfusion’ to highlight the BT developments in Pakistan. Many other areas of mutual interest were also identified and work is on progress to crystallize these ideas.

In August, the four remaining Separate Agreements for the SBTP Phase II were signed between the KFW and the various provinces and regions. Brief report of these meetings and signing ceremonies is included in this newsletter. These signings mark the completion of the Phase II Agreement requirements. And work has now begun in earnest on the implementation of the Phase II. The initial period of Inception Phase will be completed within this year followed by project implementation in the next three years. Based on the experience gained in the Phase I and the development of many systems and processes it is expected that project implementation will be timely and smooth.

The Phase I RBCs has now been completed in all the provinces including Sindh. And these RBCs are now gradually becoming operational and providing quality service to the public. Report of the Peshawar RBC is included in this edition and similar developments are also taking place in some other RBCs also. The SBTP is planning to initiate a ‘Mentoring Programme’ for these RBCs to ensure that standards are maintained and the new infrastructure is technically interlinked so that envisaged impact of the new system is obvious and clearly visible.

The core SBTP team is actively involved in R&D activities. This newsletter also includes a list of some recent SBTP research articles published in renowned national and international journals. Some of this work has already been presented in various international forums.
SBTP Phase II Separate Agreement signed between KFW and the M/o National Health Services

The Separate Agreement for the SBTP Phase II was signed by Mr. Muhammad Ayub Shaikh, Secretary, M/o National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination in Islamabad. Dr. Masuma Zaidi (KFW), Mr. Zahid Mehmood (EPOS), Dr. Samra Mazhar (NHS,R&C) and Prof. H.A Zaheer (SBTP) were also present on the occasion. The Health Secretary appreciated the German government support for the blood project and said that access to safe and quality blood is a key priority of the government in the health sector. He stated that the infrastructure developed in the Phase I is in the process of becoming operationalized and will have a very significant impact on improving the safety standards of transfusion services in the country. And expansion of the size and scope of the project through the Phase II funding will further strengthen the transfusion sector.

Dr. Masuma Zaidi, KFW Representative thanked the Health Secretary for taking special interest in the project. She also congratulated the Secretary on the signing of all the Separate Agreements through which the network of modern Blood Centres will be increased and the existing Hospital Blood Banks will be upgraded. She assured that the highest standards of construction will be maintained and latest modern equipment procured for these Centers and the hospital blood banks.

Prof. Zaheer, National Coordinator, SBTP, informed that in the Phase II the German funded Islamabad Regional Blood Centre will also be constructed in Islamabad in the vicinity of a new hospital, health institutes, colleges and universities. He added that the Islamabad Blood Centre will develop international collaborations for trainings and research and development and also serve as a model for the provinces to emulate.

Representatives of SBTP and KFW Meeting with Khawaja Salman Rafique, Advisor to Chief Minister Punjab on Health

The SBTP team held a meeting with Punjab DoH team in Lahore. Khawaja Salman Rafique, Advisor to Chief Minister Punjab on Health, Mr. Najam Shah, Dr. Salman Shahid, Additional Secretary, Dr. Zafar Iqbal, Director IBTS and others represented Punjab DoH. The SBTP team was led by Prof. Hasan Abbas Zaheer National Coordinator SBTP and also included Dr. Masuma Zaidi, KFW Representative and Mr. Zahid Mehmood, EPOS Team Leader.

SBTP Phase II Separate Agreement (Punjab) was signed on the occasion. Khawaja Salman Rafique appreciated the German government support for the project and informed that the Punjab Government will built 9 RBCs through its own funds on the SBTP model. These 9 RBCs will collect approximately 0.6 million units of blood annually. Syncing of the government funding for this model of transfusion services also indicates the strengthening of the blood safety systems reforms process and government ownership of the project concept.

Prof. Zaheer thanked the Advisor Health and the Secretary Health in taking keen interest in the German funded project and also developing the Punjab government scheme to expand the project model in Punjab through its own resources.

The operational challenges of the Phase I RBCs were also discussed on the occasion and the Health Advisor issued necessary instructions facilitate the administrative measures to ensure full and smooth operationalization of the new infrastructure in Multan and Bhawalpur region. The Advisor Health announced the establishment of a Provincial Steering Committee to supervise the smooth implementation of the project.

Blood Camp Organized by Mohammadi BB at Special Security Unit, Police Karachi

A blood donation camp was organized by Mohammadi Blood Bank at the Special Security Unit (SSU) Police, Karachi on August 29, 2016. A large number of SSU Commandos donated blood in the camp and more than 2500 SSU commandos pledged to donate blood regularly to the Mohammadi Blood Bank for the benefit of thalassaemia patients. Mr. Maqsood Ahmed Memon, AIGP, Commandant, SSU also donated blood and distributed gifts among thalassemic children. Mr. Muzafar (DSP), Mr. Sarwar Ali (President Muhammadi Foundation), Syed Mehdi Rizvi (CEO, Muhammadi Foundation), Dr. Muhammad Usman (Medical Director, Muhammadi Foundation), Dr. Quraitulain (Medical officer, SSU), Dr. Maeesa Wadood (Incharge Thalassemia Centre) and Thalassemic Children were also present on the occasion.
Handing Taking Over of Four Regional Blood Centres to Provincial Health Department Sindh

Four Regional Blood Centers have been developed in Sindh in addition to up gradation of 24 linked hospital based blood banks in the SBTP Phase I. The RBCs have now been completed and fully equipped. The four RBCs (Karachi, Jamshoro, Sukkur and Nawabshah) were handed over to Dr. Sikandar Mandhro, Sindh Health Minister in the month of August. Dr. Zahid Hasan Ansari, SBT Sindh, Dr. Masuma Raza, KW and Mr. Zahid Mehmoond, Team Leader EPOS was also present on the occasion. This handing taking over of the four RBCs marked the completion of first phase of the project. The RBCs are expected to become operational very soon.

Separate Agreement for the SBTP Phase-II in Sindh was also signed on the occasion. The Minister appreciated the German government for supporting the establishment of such a large infrastructure in the province of Sindh and committed to complete the necessary administrative measures at the earliest to operationalize the Centers for the benefit of the people of Sindh.

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Publication of Scientific Research Work by SBTP

In addition to the monthly e-newsletters and Annual Reports of SBTP, IBTA and WBDD, the Programme also regularly publishes its research work in reputed international and national research journals. Recently, following articles from SBTP have been published:

10. Kiani RA, Waheed U, Khan H, Zaheer HA. Audit of Laboratory Request form at a Tertiary Care Hospital of Islamabad Pakistan. JSOGP, 2016;6(2) (accepted)