

PERSONALITY OF THE MONTH

PROF. RAJINDER DHAMIJA, DIRECTOR, IHBAS, DELHI

IHBAS is Reimagining Mental Health Care Services

Strategic reforms at IHBAS are transforming it into a nationally recognized hub for compassionate, modern, and academically driven mental health care in India.

Professor Rajinder K. Dhamija, the current Director of IHBAS, exemplifies a rare synergy of clinical expertise, visionary leadership, and public policy influence. With academic roots in neurology and prestigious fellowships from the UK and Australia, he brings global best practices to local institutions. His tenure at Lady Hardinge Medical College and recognition as a WHO Fellow laid a strong foundation for his later reforms at IHBAS. Since 2022, Prof. Dhamija has spearheaded a transformative overhaul—doubling faculty strength, digitizing patient services, and launching specialized departments such as Neuropalliative Care and Geriatric Mental Health. His efforts in institutional governance have revived transparency and operational efficiency. Prof. Dhamija's

vision for IHBAS is clear: to build an institution that is not only a center of clinical excellence but also a nurturing environment for the next generation of mental health professionals.

The changes at IHBAS are a testament to his leadership, and as the institute continues to grow, it will undoubtedly play a pivotal role in shaping the future of mental health care in India.

*In this candid conversation, with **Drug Today Medical Times'** Rohit Shishodia, Professor Dhamija outlines how a mix of administrative reform, academic expansion, and compassionate care is transforming IHBAS into a national model for holistic mental healthcare.*

DTMT: Academic growth is just one part of the transformation. What other significant reforms have been introduced, especially in terms of

administration and services?

Prof. Rajinder Dhamija: You're right; the transformation isn't only academic. We've also made a concerted effort to streamline administration and improve services for both our patients and staff. A major breakthrough came in May 2024 when we implemented the New Pension Scheme (NPS), something that had been delayed for nearly two decades. This wasn't just a financial measure; it was about restoring trust among our staff and showing that we value their hard work and commitment.

We've also focused on digitizing our services. For example, we introduced real-time access to lab results, which is a huge relief for both doctors and patients. Additionally, we've made patient-friendly improvements, such as new



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registration counters and upgraded pharmacy services. These changes make the experience more comfortable and less time-consuming for patients, which is essential in a high-traffic hospital setting like ours.

DTMT: IHBAS has always been known for its quality care. How do you maintain and elevate these standards?

Prof. Rajinder Dhamija: Quality care is at the heart of everything we do at IHBAS. I'm pleased to share that in July 2024, we were re-accredited by the National Accreditation Board

for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers (NABH). This reaffirmed our commitment to patient safety and care. Additionally, our Department of Pathology earned NABL accreditation under ISO 15189:2022, which aligns us with some of the top diagnostic facilities in the country. These certifications speak volumes about the rigorous standards we maintain in our clinical operations.

Furthermore, we are continuously reviewing and upgrading our protocols to ensure that we are adhering to the highest standards of care. We understand that qual-

ity healthcare isn't just about technology or infrastructure; it's about a culture of care that is ingrained in every aspect of the hospital.

DTMT: Infrastructure development often takes time in many medical institutions. What changes have been made in this regard at IHBAS?

Prof. Rajinder Dhamija: Infrastructure is crucial, and we've been working hard to enhance it. We've increased our indoor bed capacity from 296 to 317 to accommodate a growing number of patients. The outpatient department (OPD) has also been revamped, with the addition of a large waiting hall for caregivers and patients. These small but significant changes are designed to ensure comfort and dignity for our patients.

We've also worked on streamlining services with new registration and

pharmacy counters to minimize waiting times and improve the overall patient experience. The aim is to create an environment where both staff and patients feel that their time and needs are valued, which, in turn, creates a more efficient and compassionate healthcare system.

DTMT: Looking at the transformation of IHBAS, if you had to sum it up in one line, what would it be?

Prof. Rajinder Dhamija: IHBAS is evolving into a model of holistic, compassionate, and modern mental health care — a place where patients, students, and professionals can thrive.

DTMT: What's next for IHBAS? How do you plan to build on this momentum?

Prof. Rajinder Dhamija: We've achieved a lot, but this is just the beginning. There's so

much more to do. We will continue to expand our academic programs, with new courses and specialized training to meet the needs of the mental health sector. We are also focusing on strengthening our research and community outreach efforts. Mental health is evolving rapidly in India, and we want IHBAS to be at the forefront of that change.

We are also working on increasing our collaborations with national and international organizations to share knowledge, resources, and best practices.

The future looks bright, and we are committed to continuing to build on the foundation we've laid so far. Our goal is to create an institution that not only excels in clinical care but also serves as a beacon of learning and research in the mental health field.