

# AWARENESS ABOUT INVISIBLE DISABILITIES IS IMPORTANT

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Persons with Disability including Mentally Ill People - Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

Purple Fest 2024: Stepping out of the shadows and into the spotlight, India's first National Conference on Invisible Disabilities took place as part of the ongoing International Purple Fest-Goa, 2024, tackling the challenges faced by millions silently battling internal battles.

Led by Chronic Pain India and Believe in Invisible, the conference, in collaboration with Department of Empowerment of Persons With Disability, GoI and the State Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities, Goa, sought to bring awareness and solutions to the often-overlooked realm of invisible disabilities.

"These are disabilities you can't see with your naked eyes," explains Dr. Anubha Mahajan, founder of Chronic Pain India, herself an invisible disability warrior. "People with chronic pains, autoimmune disorders, neurological conditions – their struggles are real, their limitations debilitating, yet they often lack access to essential healthcare and social support."

The conference delved into the complex world of these hidden battles, highlighting the need for clearer definitions, specialized doctors, and improved healthcare options. The government's recent focus on invisible disabilities through the G20 and this conference itself were seen as positive steps towards a brighter future.

But the road ahead is long. Concerns about health insurance exclusions, lack of UDID grants, and limited specialized medical workforce were addressed, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive policies and increased awareness, were points raised about hindrances in moving forward.

The conference focused not only on numbers and policy, but also on storytelling. The audience, a diverse group of people with invisible disabilities and concerned professionals, shared their stories, providing insight into the unseen battles and everyday achievements. The audience also included 40 BA.Ed students from Vidya Prabodhini College, Porvorim.

From chronic fatigue to debilitating pain, from cognitive impairments to social isolation, the stories resonated, challenging stereotypes and reminding us that disabilities come in many forms.

The National Conference on Invisible Disabilities marks a significant step forward. It's a beacon of hope for the millions living in the shadows, a call to action for policymakers and healthcare providers, and a reminder that even the hidden battles deserve to be seen and understood.

A number of events have been happening simultaneously across venues. A convention on Spinal Cord Injury at GMC, Bambolim highlighted how treatment is advanced today and addressed various issues related to a spinal cord injury. There was also a NHRDN Thought Leadership Forum at ESG. A convention on Accessible Publishing by DFI which aimed at plugging all gaps that exist in production, distribution, and reading publications in Braille, Digital talking book, accessible e-text.

Laying emphasis on the Disability Rights, there was an advocate conference held at the High

Court in which several senior lawyers of the state participated.

A bird trail in Carambolim, a cruise ride on Mandovi River and Drum Circle at Kala Academy were some activities under Purple Fun organised to bring a smile and allow delegates to unwind in Goa.

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## **MG/MS/VL/SD**

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