

## “Pushing the Boundaries: Breakthrough in Research Culture” A Report on the First Research Conference of the Institute of Medicine (IOM-RECON25)

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### ABSTRACT

The First Research Conference of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) was held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2025 in Kathmandu with the theme "Pushing the boundaries: breakthrough in research culture" It provided a platform for researchers, clinicians, students, and institutional leaders from IOM's constituent and affiliate colleges to collaborate, share findings, and inspire innovation, recognizing the need for locally tailored evidence-based healthcare. The event, organized by the Research Department of IOM, featured 52 presentations, including two keynote speeches, 17 invited thematic lectures, two panel discussions, and 31 free paper presentations. Expert chairpersons guided these sessions, facilitating the presentations and discussions. The conference represented a significant step in enhancing IOM's academic quality and research capabilities. It encouraged collaboration and innovation while promoting evidence-based medical practices.

### Keywords

*Evidence-based healthcare, Institute of Medicine, research conference*

### INTRODUCTION

The First Research Conference of the Institute of Medicine (IOM-RECON25), held on July 12, 2025, at Park Village Resort in Kathmandu, aimed to promote a strong research culture and academic excellence at the IOM, Tribhuvan University. As Nepal faces unique healthcare challenges, including a shortage of locally relevant and evidence-based healthcare practices,<sup>1,2</sup> the urgency to bridge gaps in healthcare delivery and improve outcomes through contextually appropriate research has increasingly been recognized by stakeholders.<sup>3,4</sup> By focusing on research needs, possible collaboration opportunities, and evidence-informed practices, the conference sought to enhance scientific knowledge that directly impacts the socio-cultural and health system context of Nepal. Under the visionary leadership of Prof. Dr. Mohan Raj Sharma, Dean of IOM, the event was designed to establish a sustainable research environment that fosters innovation, collaboration, and effective knowledge translation, ultimately contributing to the nation's healthcare resilience and progress.

A dedicated team (Table 1) expertly organized the conference: Prof. Dr. Paleswan Joshi Lakhey, Organizing Chairperson and Director of the Research Department, led the scientific coordination; Dr. Hem Raj Paneru, Organizing Secretary, managed logistics, communications, and stakeholder engagement; and Dr. Olita Shilpakar, Scientific Chairperson, curated content to ensure relevance, diversity, and academic rigor.

Working closely with the Dean's Office, they developed a comprehensive program featuring dual parallel scientific sessions in two conference halls to maximize coverage of research topics and accommodate keynote speeches, panel discussions, invited lectures and 31 free paper presentations (Table 2). Additionally, administrative and strategic inputs from the Dean's Office and Research Department guided program design and participant selection, ensuring a thematic focus

on evidence-based medical practice aligned with Nepal's realities.

The conference started with the welcome speech from the organizing chairperson Prof. Paleswan Joshi Lakhey (Figure 1) and was formally inaugurated by the Chief Guest Prof. Deepak Aryal, Vice Chancellor of Tribhuvan University (TU) by lighting the panas (Figure 2).

## SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

The scientific program included Keynote speeches, panel discussions, invited lectures, presentations on research progress, opportunities and challenges by the representatives from the constituent and affiliate colleges of IOM, and free papers.

### Keynote speeches

There were two keynote speeches at the conference. The first, delivered by Dr. Tarun Saluja

**Table 1.** IOM-RECON25 Organizing Committee

Role	Personnel/Members
Organizing Chairperson	Prof. Dr. Paleswan Joshi Lakhey
Organizing Secretary	Dr. Hem Raj Paneru
Scientific Chairperson	Dr. Olita Shilpakar
Advisors	Prof. Dr. Mohan Raj Sharma, Dean, IOM, TU Prof. Dr. Takma KC, Assistant Dean, Administration Prof. Dr. Abhimanyu Jha, Assistant Dean, Examination Assoc. Prof. Dr. Santa Kumar Das, Assistant Dean, Academic Prof. Dr. Suresh Upreti, Campus Chief, MMC, IOM, TU Prof. Dr. Muna Rana, Campus Chief, MNC, IOM, TU Prof. Dr. Subhash Prasad Acharya, Executive Director, TUTH Prof. Dr. Ratna Mani Gajurel, Executive Director, MCVTC Prof. Dr. Sagun Narayan Joshi, Executive Director, BPKLCOS Associate Prof. Dr. Shiva Mangal Prasad, Ayurveda Campus
Scientific Committee	Dr. Priska Bastola Dr. Pranil Man Singh Pradhan Dr. Bishal Poudel Dr. Bidur Adhikari Dr. Shiva Mangal Prasad Dr. Amit Sharma Bhattarai Dr. Sumita Pradhan Dr. Sagun Ballav Pant Ms. Sujata Shakya Dr. Tumla Shrestha
Logistics Committee	Dr. Lava Shrestha Dr. Bishnu Kandel Dr. Utsav Acharya Mr. Devendra Poudel Ms. Shreejana Singh Singh Mr. Nirmal Mishra, Chief Administrator, IOM Dean's Office Mr. Suraj Shrestha, Account Chief, IOM Dean's Office Ms. Evan Malla, Conference Secretary
Event Management	ABC Healthcare Solutions, Mr. Arjun Bahadur Chand



*Figure 1. Welcome speech by Organizing Chairperson Prof. Paleswan Joshi Lakhey*



*Figure 2. Inauguration of IOM-RECON25 by Prof. Deepak Aryal, Vice Chancellor of TU by lighting of panas*

**Table 2.** First IOM Research Conference 2025 (IOM-RECON25) Scientific Program Schedule

Time	Keynote Speech	Speaker	Session Chairs
9:30-10:00 am	<u>Keynote speech 1:</u> Pushing the boundaries through partnership in research	Dr. Tarun Saluja (International Vaccine Institute)	Prof. Dr. Gopal Prasad Acharya Prof. Dr. Madan Prasad Upadhyaya
10:00-10:30 am	<u>Keynote speech 2:</u> Measuring agreement and correlation with special reference to clinical data	Prof. Dr. Shankar Khanal	
Time	Panel Discussion	Panelists	Moderator
10:30-11:30 am	<u>Panel Discussion 1</u> Progress of Medical Education and Research in 53 years' history of IOM	Prof. Dr. Jagadish Prasad Agrawal Prof. Dr. Arun Sayami Prof. Dr. Dibya Singh Shah Prof. Dr. Mohan Sharma	Prof. Dr. Suresh Uprety, Campus Chief, MMC
11:30 - 12:30 pm	<u>Panel Discussion 2</u> Status of Research Funding in Nepal	Prof. Dr. Niraj Dhital (Director, Research And Scholarship Division, UGC) Prof. Dr. Ishwor Koirala (Research Director, TU) Dr. Pramod Joshi (Executive chief, NHRC) Dr. Rabindra Dhakal (Secretary, NAST)	Prof. Paleswan Joshi Lakhey, Director, Research Department
Time	Invited Lectures - I	Speaker	Session Chair
1:15 - 1:30 pm	Essentials of Grant Writing	Prof. Dr. Mohan Raj Sharma	Prof. Dr. Takma KC
1:30 - 1:45 pm	Clinical trial design and infrastructure challenges in Nepal	Prof. Dr. Buddha Basnyat	Prof. Dr. Dwarika Prasad Shrestha, Chairman, IRC - IOM
1:45 - 2:00 pm	Ethics in evolving health research	Prof. Dr. Aarati Shah	
2:15 - 2:30 pm	Demystifying clinical research method	Prof. Dr. Mahesh Maskey	
Time	Invited Lectures - II	Speaker	Session Chair
2:30 - 2:45 pm	Scope of basic science research in Nepal	Prof. Dr. Jeevan Sherchand	Prof. Dr. Arun Kumar Sharma Prof. Dr. Subhash Prasad Acharya
2:45 - 3:00 pm	Research culture in residency: relevance of thesis writing	Prof. Dr. Ramesh Singh Bhandari	
3:00 - 3:15 pm	Institution-based Vs Community-based research	Prof. Dr. Sarala Shrestha	
3:15 - 3:30 pm	Leveraging ICU registry to build research capacity in Nepal: A pathway to sustainable critical care research	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Diptesh Aryal	
Time	Research Forum of Constituent and Affiliated Colleges Research progress: Challenges and opportunities	Speakers	Session Chair
3:45 - 5:30 PM	Background, ongoing research activities, challenges and opportunities at Janaki Medical College	Assoc. Professor Jitendra Kumar Singh	Prof. Dr. Mohan Raj Sharma Prof. Dr. Paleswan Joshi Lakhey
	Background, ongoing research activities, challenges and opportunities at Chitwan Medical College	Prof. Dr. Daya Ram Lamsal	
	Background, ongoing research activities, challenges and opportunities at KIST Medical College	Prof. Dr. Balman Singh Karki	
	Background, ongoing research activities, challenges and opportunities at Ayrveda Campus, TU	Dr. Bishun Dayal Prasad Patel	
	Background, ongoing research activities, challenges and opportunities at Maharajgunj Nursing Campus	Prof. Dr. Muna Rana	
	Background, ongoing research activities, challenges and opportunities at Nepal Army Institute of Health Sciences	Prof. Dr. Devendra Bhadrur Khatri	
	Background, ongoing research activities, challenges and opportunities at Universal College of Medical Sciences	Assoc. Prof Anuja Kachapati	
	Background, ongoing research activities, challenges and opportunities at People's Dental College	Prof. Dr. Surendra Man Shrestha	
	Background, ongoing research activities, challenges and opportunities at National Medical College	Dr. Parweej Ansari	
	Background, ongoing research activities, challenges and opportunities at Maharajgunj Medical Campus	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Khem Bhadrur Karki	
	Background, ongoing research activities, challenges and opportunities at Central Department of Public Health	Prof. Dr. Amod Kumar Poudyal	
	Background, ongoing research activities, challenges and opportunities at Gandaki Medical College	Prof. Dr. Rabeendra Prasad Shrestha, GMC	

**Table 2.** First IOM Research Conference 2025 (IOM-RECON25) Scientific Program Schedule (contd...)

Time	Free papers - I	Speakers	Session Chairs
1:00-2:30 PM	Outcome in elective and emergency aortic aneurysm repair	Prof. Dr. Uttam Krishna Shrestha	Prof. Dr. YP Singh Prof. Dr. Saroj Prasad Ojha Prof. Dr. Arjun Lamichhane
	Persistence of immunity following a single dose of inactivated	Prof. Dr. Arun Kumar Sharma	
	Where do we stand - Emergency Medicine in Nepal with the World	Assoc. Prof. Ramesh Kumar Maharjan	
	Female community health volunteers' knowledge, attitude, and practice towards antimicrobials	Prof. Dr. Nisha Jha	
	Study of prevalence of congenital heart disease in school children - A nationwide survey.	Prof. Dr. Ratnamani Gajurel	
	Factors associated with caregiving burden on family caregivers of older adults with disability, Kathmandu, Nepal	Assoc. Prof. Raj Devi Adhikari Ghimire	
	Endovascular aneurysm repair in Nepal: opportunities and challenges	Prof. Dr. Uttam Krishna Shrestha	
	Factors associated with suicide among community people in two provinces of Nepal: mixed method research	Assoc Prof. Poojan Sharma	
	Knowledge, attitude and practice of medical students and interns about climate change and its impact on human health: a cross-sectional questionnaire-based study in Lalitpur, Nepal	Dr. Tejendra Manandhar	
	Validity of the Nepali version of the Ask Suicide-Screening Questions Tool for identifying elevated suicidal risk in nepali Medical in-patients	Dr. Daman Raj Poudel	
Immune response status in patients with acute undifferentiated fever	Dr. Eans Tara Tuladhar		
Time	Free papers - II	Speakers	Session Chairs
2:30-4:00 PM	Embracing reflection and reflective practices by medical professionals: a qualitative inquiry	Dr. Priska Bastola	Prof. Dr. Bharat Mani Pokhrel Assoc Prof. Dr. Pradeep Gyawali
	Respiratory syncytial virus infection among young children admitted to a pediatric intensive care units in Nepal	Dr. Rupesh Shrestha	
	AI powered task shifting for high-quality fetal ultrasound service in community health care settings	Dr. Pradeep Raj Regmi	
	Recurrent Laryngeal nerve palsy following thyroid surgery - 12 years' experience	Dr. Prashant Tripathi	
	Emergency record analysis and profile of patients at emergency of a university hospital, Kathmandu	Dr. Manjita Bajracharya	
	Factors affecting mortality in critically ill patients at a Level III ICU in Nepal: A registry based retrospective observational study	Dr. Sachit Sharma	
	Building Brain Tumor Registry at Bir Hospital: Bridging gaps in cancer data and care	Dr. Namrata Khadka	
	Assessment of adverse drug reactions and medication errors in a tertiary care teaching hospital in Lalitpur, Nepal	Dr. Anjula Palikhe	
	From pipes to pixels: innovating through necessity and collaboration	Dr. Bigyan Raj Gyawali	
	Analysis of pharmaceuticals inventory management in a teaching hospital.	Dr. Ayush Rauniyar	
Time	Free papers - II	Speakers	Session Chairs
4:00-5:45 PM	Plastic Surgery in resource-constrained settings: A 27 year statistical review at a tertiary care center of Nepal	Dr. Anup Thapa	Prof. Dr. Anil Shrestha Prof. Dr. Sangha Ratna Bajracharya
	Adherence to antenatal care guidelines among mothers in Lalitpur district: a mixed-methods study	Ms Riya Bajracharya	
	Evaluation of swallowing dysfunction in children with laryngomalacia	Dr. Manish Neupane	
	Effectiveness of educational intervention on awareness regarding breast cancer among reproductive aged women in a community	Ms. Asmita Shrestha	
	Clinicopathological profile and surgical outcomes of colorectal malignancies: a retrospective cross-sectional study at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital	Dr. Sampanna Pandey	
	Changes in Biochemical parameters during Ramadan Fasting: A cross-sectional study in healthy Nepalese males	Dr. Imran Kamal	
	Association between serum uric acid and thyroid function tests in general health checkup participants	Dr. Sanskriti Pandit	
	Quality of life after Frey's procedure for chronic pancreatitis	Dr. Nishef Adhikari	
	Poor sleep quality and uncontrolled glycemia in Diabetes Mellitus patients	Dr. Rina Jha	
	Monocyte distribution width as an infection biomarker: a scoping review	Dr. Suraj Shrestha	



**Figure 3.** Keynote speech by Dr. Tarun Saluja "Pushing the boundaries through partnership in research"

from the International Vaccine Institute, was titled "Pushing the boundaries through partnership in research" and emphasized the importance of collaborative partnerships to drive innovation and impact in global health research (Figure 3).

The second keynote, presented by Prof. Dr. Shankar Khanal, focused on "Measuring agreement and correlation with special reference to clinical data," highlighting key statistical approaches essential for accurate interpretation and reliability in clinical research data. Together, these talks framed the conference themes of collaboration and methodological rigor.

### Panel discussions

Two panels addressed pivotal aspects of medical education and research in Nepal. The first panel discussion focused on the "Progress of Medical Education and Research in the 53 years' history of IOM." Moderated by Prof. Dr. Suresh Uprey, this session brought together esteemed panelists the former deans of IOM including Prof. Dr. Arun Sayami, Prof. Dr. Jagadish Prasad Agrawal and Prof. Dr. Dibya Singh Shah, with the current dean Prof. Dr. Mohan Sharma. They reflected on the significant advancements and milestones accomplished by the Institute of Medicine over its five decades of existence (Figure 4). The discussion

covered critical developments in curriculum, infrastructure, research output, and the evolving role of IOM in shaping healthcare professionals in Nepal. Members highlighted institutional challenges, achieved successes, and the future direction needed to sustain and elevate medical education and research quality.

Following this, the second panel discussion centered on the "Status of Research Funding in Nepal," which was moderated by Prof. Dr. Paleswan Joshi Lakhey, the director of Research Department at IOM. Panelists included leaders from major research institutions and funding bodies such as Niraj Dhital, the Director of the Research and Scholarship Division at the University Grants Commission, Prof. Dr. Ishwor Koirala, the director of the Research Department at Tribhuvan University, Dr. Pramod Joshi, the member secretary of Nepal Health Research Council, and Dr. Rabindra Dhakal, the secretary at Nepal Academy of Science and Technology. This session critically examined current funding landscapes, ways to access research grants, and strategic priorities for strengthening Nepal's research infrastructure. They discussed the importance of multisectoral collaboration, transparency in grant allocation, and capacity building to enhance research productivity.

Both panel discussions provided participants with



Figure 4. Panel discussion on "Progress of medical education and research in the 53 years' history of IOM"



Figure 5. Invited lecture by Prof. Mahesh Maskey on "Demystifying clinical research method"

a comprehensive understanding of institutional progress, funding challenges, and the collaborative efforts essential to advancing health research and education in Nepal.

### Invited lectures

The invited lectures provided essential insights into advancing medical research and education in Nepal. The first session, chaired by Prof. Dr. Takma KC and Prof. Dr. Dwarika Prasad Shrestha, began with Prof. Dr. Mohan Sharma's discussion on the fundamentals of grant writing, equipping researchers with vital skills to secure funding. Prof. Dr. Buddha Basnyat then highlighted the challenges in clinical trial design and infrastructure within Nepal, emphasizing the need for stronger frameworks and resources. Ethics in evolving health research was addressed by Prof. Dr. Aarati Shah, who stressed maintaining ethical standards amid advancing technologies. The session concluded with Prof. Dr. Mahesh Maskey clarifying clinical research methods to aid investigators in study design and data analysis (Figure 5).

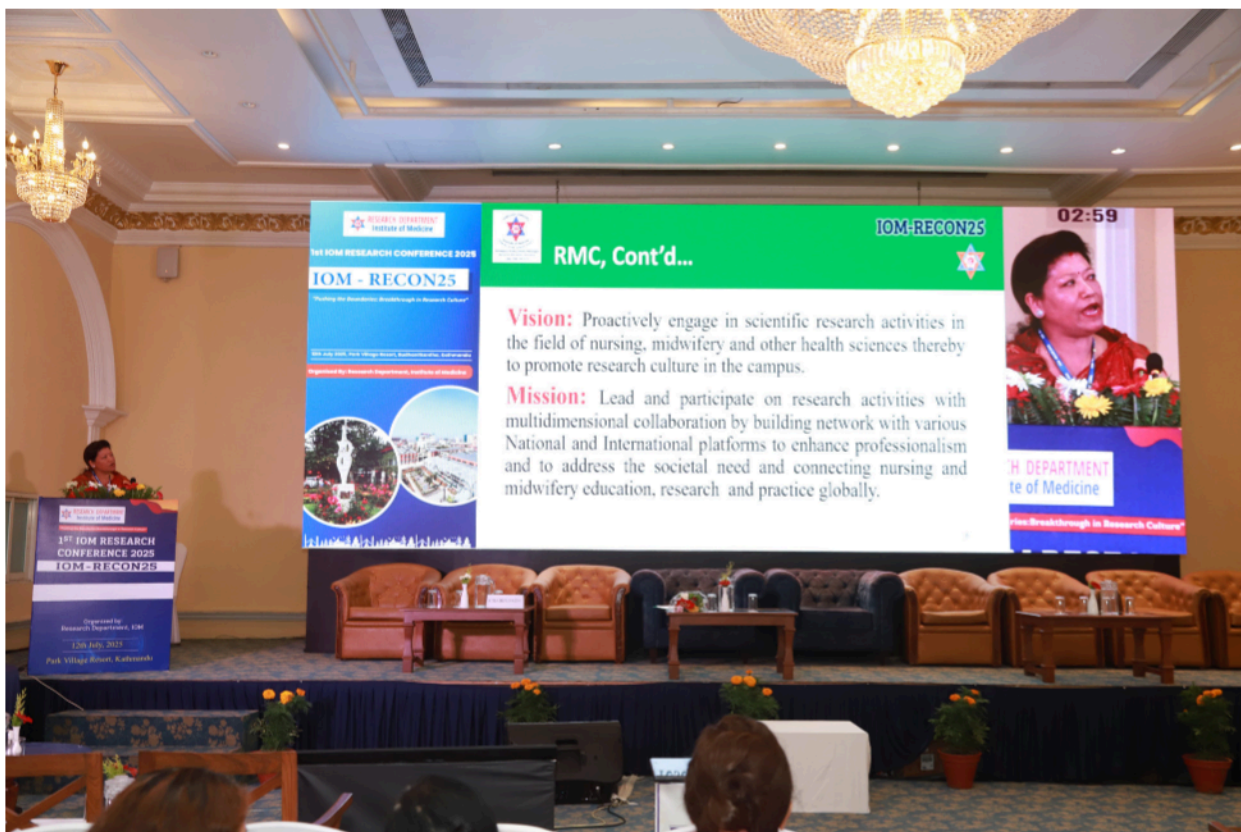
The second session, chaired by Prof. Dr. Arun Kumar Sharma and Prof. Dr. Subhash Prasad Acharya, focused on building research culture and capacity. Prof. Dr. Jeevan Sherchand discussed opportunities in basic science research, while Prof. Dr. Ramesh

Singh Bhandari emphasized the importance of thesis writing in residency programs. Prof. Dr. Sarala Shrestha compared institution-based and community-based research approaches, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Diptesh Aryal shared how leveraging ICU registries could foster sustainable critical care research in Nepal. Overall, these lectures equipped participants with practical tools, ethical guidance, and strategies to strengthen research in the country.

### Research forum for constituent and affiliate colleges

The Research Forum of Constituent and Affiliated Colleges at the 1<sup>st</sup> IOM Research Conference 2025 showcased the diverse landscape of ongoing research activities, challenges, and opportunities in their colleges and hospitals. This forum provided a platform for representatives from eleven colleges to present brief overviews of the research activities by the faculty members and the students, barriers to and facilitators of clinical research within the colleges and current progress (Figure 6).

The presentations also addressed barriers such as limited research training, data management issues, and the need to strengthen institutional support for research activities. Chairpersons including Prof. Dr. Mohan Raj Sharma and Prof. Dr. Paleswan Joshi Lakhey facilitated discussions that urged



*Figure 6. Research forum for constituent and affiliate colleges presentation by Prof. Muna Rana, Maharajgunj Nursing Campus*

collective action to overcome systemic challenges. This comprehensive forum functioned not only as a progress report but also as an important dialogue to align strategies, motivate collaboration, and inspire the growth of a robust research culture among medical colleges and affiliated institutions across Nepal.

### Free papers

The Free Papers sessions showcased a broad range of clinical and public health research relevant to Nepal. Divided into three sessions, the presentations covered topics such as outcomes in aortic aneurysm repair, persistence of vaccine immunity, emergency medicine status, and antimicrobial practices among community health volunteers. Research on pediatric respiratory infections, medication errors, and adverse drug reactions highlighted key clinical challenges. Innovative work like AI-powered fetal ultrasound and pharmaceutical inventory management demonstrated technological advancements.

The sessions also included studies on surgical outcomes, antenatal care, cancer registries, and quality of life after major procedures. These presentations reflected the expanding research capacity and diversity in Nepal's healthcare sector, facilitating knowledge exchange and collaboration among researchers. Overall, the Free Papers sessions provided a vital platform for disseminating new evidence and addressing critical health issues across the country.

A significant highlight of this session of the conference was the recognition of outstanding research and presentation skills among participants in their residency training. Dr. Sampanna Pandey, MCh Resident in Surgical Gastroenterology, was awarded the Best Oral Paper Presentation Award for his research presentation titled "Clinicopathological profile and surgical outcomes of colorectal malignancies: a retrospective cross-sectional study at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital." The award included a certificate, a token of love, and a cash prize of NPR 10,000.

### OUTCOMES AND LIMITATIONS

The conference achieved several important outcomes. It established a high-quality, inclusive platform that successfully united diverse participants across disciplines and career stages, facilitating vibrant knowledge exchange and strengthening the community within Nepal's research ecosystem. A strong emphasis was placed on need-based research and contextual relevance, repeatedly highlighting the necessity of aligning research questions and methodologies with Nepal's health system and cultural context to maximize impact on public health policy and clinical

practice. The conference promoted capacity building among students, junior researchers, and clinicians, fostering future innovation and evidence-based healthcare delivery. It encouraged cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional collaborations that could enhance Nepal's research output and relevance. Moreover, it provided a replicable model for other institutions in low- and middle-income countries seeking to cultivate research cultures despite resource limitations. Ultimately, the conference contributed to strengthening Nepal's health system resilience through evidence-informed decision-making and the design of tailored interventions.

Institutional commitment was demonstrated, with leadership from the Dean's Office and Research Department signaling a sustained dedication to improving research standards, infrastructure, and capacity building at IOM. The event also enhanced visibility and networking opportunities, fostering collaborations and mentorship, especially among students and emerging researchers—crucial for sustaining a vibrant research culture. The interactive format promoted active knowledge exchange and collaborative reflection on the current status and future directions of need-based research in Nepal. Together, these elements provided a comprehensive understanding of ongoing research activities, emerging themes, and knowledge gaps within Nepal's medical and health science community.

To maintain this momentum, sustained institutional support and refinement of the conference format will be essential to achieving long-term goals.

Several challenges were noted during the conduct of the conference:

1. The inaugural edition, limited to a single day, restricted the number of presentations and depth of discussions,
2. Participant diversity, though wide within institutional boundaries, lacked geographic and international representation, limiting exposure to global perspectives and cross-border collaboration opportunities,
3. Absence of formal evaluation frameworks such as structured metrics and follow-up mechanisms hindered quantitative assessment of immediate and long-term impacts on research culture and practice,
4. Resource constraints related to infrastructure and funding restricted the expansion of activities and broader dissemination of knowledge beyond the conference attendees.

### CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The First Research Conference of IOM laid a strong foundation for advancing a vibrant and sustainable research culture at the Institute of Medicine, Tribhuvan University, and across Nepal's medical education. By emphasizing need-based, contextually

scholars. Despite certain limitations related to duration, participant diversity, and evaluation mechanisms, the conference set a new standard for scientific engagement and evidence-informed practice in Nepal. Moving forward, continued institutional support and iterative improvements will be vital in sustaining this momentum and realizing the conference's long-term goal of strengthening Nepal's healthcare system through innovative, locally grounded research and collaborative knowledge translation.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This event would not have been possible without the tireless contributions of the organizing committee, institutional leaders, session chairpersons including Prof. Dr. Takma KC, Associate Prof. Dr. Santa Kumar Das, Prof. Dr. Suresh Uprety, Prof. Dr. Ratna Mani Gajurel, Prof. Dr. Sagun Narayan Joshi, Prof. Dr. Arun Kumar Sharma, Prof. Amod Poudel and Prof. Dr. Subhash Prasad Acharya and the enthusiastic participation of all delegates.

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## Declaration of Generative AI use during manuscript writing

ChatGPT was used during the preparation of this work in order to improve readability and use of English language. The authors reviewed and edited the content after use of the AI and they take full responsibility for the content of the paper.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare that they do not have any conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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