Demonetized Cost of Neuroscience: Time for “Modi” Brain Fund

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The Indian Prime Minister’s audacious step to end dirty money and ban high-value currency notes in India is being widely argued as a big blow to terrorism, drug mafia and patient referral mini-economy that thrived on cash and counterfeit notes, and out-of-pocket expenses of patients. This has led to the channelizing of black money into the bank accounts of poor, providing a golden opportunity to launch new research projects related to affective neuroscience and examine its impact on the happiness index among poor. Social neuroscientists have an opportunity to study how the entire Indian society suddenly stands divided, not on the basis of cast, religion or language but as hoarders of black money and the honest tax payers, the rich and the poor, and Pro-PM and anti-PM media and its impact on social brain which has become a subject of intense debate among neuropsychologists. The recently held 3 state municipal corporation elections have proved the claims of media wrong that the long queues of individuals waiting to obtain cash from ATMs felt harassed. Not long ago, editorials that once endorsed “intolerance” in India, citing the drama of pseudo-intellectuals, to give up their awards, have stopped writing or finding holes in the new found joy of the poor who patiently waited in long queues for cash withdrawal, anxiously awaiting reforms about benami property and hoarding of gold.

The call for analysis of health benefits of PM’s International Yoga Day role modeling, had barely stirred up the establishment of centers of integrative medicine in the country, that the “subjects” affected by demonetization

are getting ready to be recruited for neuropsychological analysis in such centers, for yoga-based cognitive intervention. New research papers are solicited through this editorial that examines the neuropsychological effects of demonetization, including the quotient of happiness among the poor and compliant tax payers on one hand and black money hoarders on the other. Another subject of research is the reported disposal of black money in garbage houses and rivers by some, while others adapted to cashless transactions. Such studies can be anonymized by engaging banks where the huge cash of demonetized money was deposited.

Funding

No Indian had imagined that the call to demonetize Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes by Swami Ramdev, a popular Indian seer, Yoga Guru and untrained scientist, would be reduced to practice by the Indian Prime Minister so swiftly and firmly, in the same generation. Many Indian scientists had started complaining about reduced funding in research. The new financial year now promises increased funding for research and development programs as the government exchequer is once again flush with funds, left dry at the time of last change of government because the

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fund collection in the last 50 days exceeded a whopping Rs 1,500,000 crores (USD 22,077 billion). Some funds can be allocated for neuroscience research in India under “Modi” brain fund.

New Roads for Research

There is a general perception that the authenticity of data generated from re-emerging economies like India is interpreted with caution. With increased funding, government agencies are expected to mandate implementation of quality assurance programs in Institutes where it provides funds to make data traceable, auditable and verifiable. This will attract more collaborations, joint projects and many more multi-disciplinary, multi-national initiatives for societal good. These can be sourced from “Modi” brain fund.

Integrative Medicine

The emergence of integrative medicine is necessitated by the growing corruption in medical practice, patient referrals, out-of-pocket expenses and callousness towards complex and incurable disorders. Increased funding is expected to focus on preventive and public initiatives, integration of lifestyle intervention through yoga and alter-

native therapies which is possible through the establishment of centers of integrative medicine. Since most of the incurable and genetic diseases pertain to the brain and there has been a recent failure of Alzheimer’s disease clinical trials in its final phase, the Indian lawmakers are considering centers of integrative medicine to be managed by eminent neuroscientists. The funding can be sourced from “Modi” brain fund.

Cash Is King in Conferences?

Much of the dirty money from Pharma industry finds its way to sponsoring conferences. With increased collection from taxes, the out-of-pocket expenses of poor patients can be curtailed by mandating Institute-sponsored conferences rather than pharma-sponsored meetings. This will help the poor patients to seek affordable treatments and genetic screening for empowering the girl child [1] without having the need to go to private labs for investigations. Enforcement Directorate and Income Tax Departments have so far neglected this field of corruption.

The recent spurt of change in RBI guidelines has cornered the corrupt, similarly rapid changes in rules of governance in medical institutes must be implemented to corner the corrupt medical practices. One way is to erect an interdisciplinary team in the spirit of newly revamped national medical commission (NMC).

Reference

- 1 Anand A: Affordable neurogenetic screening as a powerful tool for beti bachao. *Ann Neurol* 2016;23:195–196.