

Mind over Matter

Through the programme, 'Discovering New Scientists', Dr M G Deo and his team are helping interested youngsters from rural areas pursue scientific dreams



ROHAN SWAMY

THREE years ago, Dr MG Deo began an endeavour along with his team. The idea was to help interested students from class X and XII pursue dreams of scientific research. The programme, 'Discovering Little Scientists', was aimed at gathering these youngsters from rural areas across Maharashtra. Deo wanted to empower these children to not just develop a thirst for science, but also help them utilise their potential to improve the general health



of villages in the talukas in and around Pune.

"In the first year, we had only 10 students; then we had 20; and last year, 25. The increase has been very gradual for us. Hence, every step for us has been measured," says Dr Deo. The

programme was the collective brainchild of Moving Academy of Medicine and Biomedicine, of which Dr Deo is the vice-president and secretary. The programme visited the villages of Rautwadi and Navalewadi in Saswad Taluka



Dr M G Deo

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last year, and screened the people there for symptoms of anemia. This year, they will revisit the same villages to find out whether the people have developed any further

signs of the illness. "This year, a total of 30 students will be participating in the two-month course. We will visit the villages and screen the population for illnesses like

hypertension, diabetes and also test their blood haemoglobin. These are simple tests that are done so that the people can benefit along with the students," says Dr Deo.

The team will also visit villages in Wai. Deo mentions that the highlight of the programme this year is the fact that they will visit the village near the Mangaon township in Raigad. "The tribal belt near Mangaon is in dire need of upliftment. It is our duty to help the poor to come up in life. This year, we have four students out of the 30 who come from these villages. They themselves will screen the population for diabetes and hypertension. Also, they will screen the people for obesity, and chronic kidney diseases," says Deo. This programme will be conducted in collaboration with the Vanavasi Ashram School, Mangaon.

The students who are selected get a monthly stipend of Rs 2,500. All their travel expenses are also paid for by the academy. The idea behind documenting the health of people from these villages year after year is based on the famed, inter-generational Framingham Heart Study, which began in 1948 in Framingham, Middlesex County, Massachusetts. The programme will begin in mid-April and go on till mid-June. "The studies will help us generate a vast database and understand patterns of these illnesses in the villages. In addition, the students will be able to interact with members of their own community and help them become aware of the various illnesses and help them lead a healthy life," adds Dr Deo.