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- [Home](#)
- [Institutions](#)
- [News](#)
- [Product & Services](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [Job Board](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [EW Store](#)
- [Magazine](#)

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- [Universities](#)
- [School](#)
- [Preschool](#) NEW
- [Mass Communication](#)
- [B School](#)
- [Engineering](#)

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AddressHealth & Parikrma felicitate schools with innovative healthcare practices

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The Parikrma Address School Health Awards, in its second edition, felicitated schools with innovative healthcare practices at a glittering ceremony in Bangalore on Wednesday, February 22. Dr Shalini Rajneesh, principal secretary, Health & Family Welfare, Government of Karnataka was the chief guest for the event. The awards have been instituted by AddressHealth - a leading player in paediatric primary healthcare market in Bangalore and Hyderabad, in partnership with Parikrma Humanity Foundation - a Bangalore based non-profit organisation, to encourage schools to promote a healthy school environment.



The initiative aims to recognise schools which are spreading awareness on leading a healthy life among children. Over 73 schools participated in the awards, with 54 of them being inducted into Parikrma Address School Health Hall of Fame for demonstrating commitment to address at least three domains of school health such as timely health check up, health education, mental wellness and in-school health services.

Eight innovative best practices were identified by the eminent jury consisting of public health professionals, nutritionists, counselors, educators and social workers to be replicated by other schools.

Some of the innovations included Swachh Paanch Abhiyan by St Marys' Convent, T.Dasarahalli or The Euro School, Chimney Hills, which has taken up the initiative to reducing weight of the school bags. VVR School's initiative maintains oral health of children in their school campus on Sarjapur Main Road. The South School, Dr. Vivekananda Layout, monitors nutritional values of the food that students bring in their tiffin boxes every day, while the Carmel Garden Public School has a certain time table for foods which the parents are supposed to follow. The South School also gives feedback to children on how they can improve the quality of the food in the tiffin box.

Mrs Chandra, principal of St Mary's Convent, felt the need to educate children on how cleanliness leads to a healthy living. "Our Swachh Paanch Abhiyan has five verticals – cleaning school, making paper bags to avoid using plastic bags, educating people in the community about segregating wet waste from dry, cleaning public parks and markets. All these are followed by students. This was done to channelise the energy of students in a right way. We are glad our initiative is getting recognised," she said.

Talking about their school's efforts to reduce the weight of schools bags, Geeta Subramaniam, principal of Euro School Chimney Hills said, "The initiative was started to make sure the children don't suffer from any health issues due to the weight of their school bags and we are proud that the initiative is appreciated by parents and students alike. The management has replicated the rule by Government of Maharashtra which says that the weight of the school bags should not exceed 10 per cent of the students' body weight. The school management has set up a panel of five members under the vice principal which gives suggestions on how to reduce the weight of the bags."

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N. Jagadish, chairman of VVR School, which provides Preventive Dental Service in the school campus said, *"The measure was taken to make sure that my students are able to improve their much neglected oral hygiene at a very affordable cost. We also have a trained nurse and a full-time dentist present at the school during the school hours."* All the children in the school, undergo preventive dental procedures (Dental Cleaning, Fluoride Application of the teeth, Pit & Fissure Application) twice a year. The dentist visits are scheduled during their free hours. This has resulted in the tremendous improvement in oral hygiene of children. The prevalence of plaque or calculus has fallen from 24 percent to 5 percent and dental stains from 10 percent to 4 percent.

"Children spend half of their day in school where they consume two meals of their day. We wanted to make sure that they consume healthy and nutritious meals. For which we assess meals they get in their tiffin," said Gladias Peter, principal of Carmel Garden Public School. The school has implemented a time table from Monday to Friday for nutritious snacks like sprouts, dry fruits, vegetables, sandwich, fruits etc., which reduces the parents' worry about what to send on which day.

"Sending feedback to parents helps them understand how they can improve the quality of the meal," says K. Shailaja, principal of The South School.

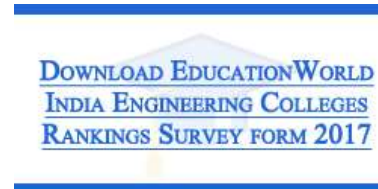
The event featured a panel discussion on whether the Measles Rubella Vaccination campaign in schools was a disruption or an innovation? The panel included Dr Latha, deputy director Immunisation, Department of Health & Family Welfare, Government of Karnataka along with principals of various schools in the city such as Mr Chaitanya of Chitrakoota School, Ms Ramalakshmi of Aham Atma Vidyalaya, Ms Snehalatha of Vyasa International School & Ms Usha Ravi of Regency Public School, doctors and parents. The principals voiced their support but wanted the logistics to be well thought out and not be last minute. Most parents are concerned about the safety and hygiene aspects of mass vaccination events. Dr Latha, said, *"We have already covered more than 1 crore children in the state and we aim to achieve higher coverage. There is no truth in the unsubstantiated rumours that are being spread using social media. We are countering such rumours with our own education campaign."*

Shukla Bose, founder and CEO of the Parikrma Humanity Foundation said, *"Parikrma Humanity Foundation has always been concerned about going beyond the curriculum and academics and we see health as part of the continuum. Through the awards, we are encouraging schools to adopt healthy practices."*

Dr. Anand Lakshman, CEO, AddressHealth, said, *"At AddressHealth, we partner with schools to deliver preventive healthcare to maximum number of students. Because only Healthy children are happy children. Last year alone, we found nearly 170 children with undiagnosed heart murmurs in schools, some of whom will need surgical interventions."*

Founded in March 2010 with the vision to make the paediatric primary care continuum possible, AddressHealth reaches out to schools, offering school health checks, school infirmary services, health education curricula, counselling and mental wellness programmes in Bangalore and Hyderabad.

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