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AIIMS Nagpur is Leveraging technology to address the health disparities in tribal population

Tele SNCU: Strengthening Newborn care in remote tribal areas of Maharashtra

1. In a ground-breaking effort to tackle newborn health inequities in India's remotest regions, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Nagpur has introduced an advanced **Tele-Special Newborn Care Unit (Tele-SNCU)** model in **Dharni**, located deep within the tribal Melghat region of Maharashtra.

Led by Dr. Nishant Banait (AIIMS Nagpur) and supported by PATH, the Tele-SNCU project uses a hub-and-spoke telemedicine model to connect AIIMS neonatologists with the SNCU at Sub-District Hospital, Dharni—a remote tribal area with high infant mortality. Using 360° cameras, IoT-enabled devices, and real-time dashboards, the team provides virtual rounds, consultations, and remote training all without being on-site.

Key Outcomes:

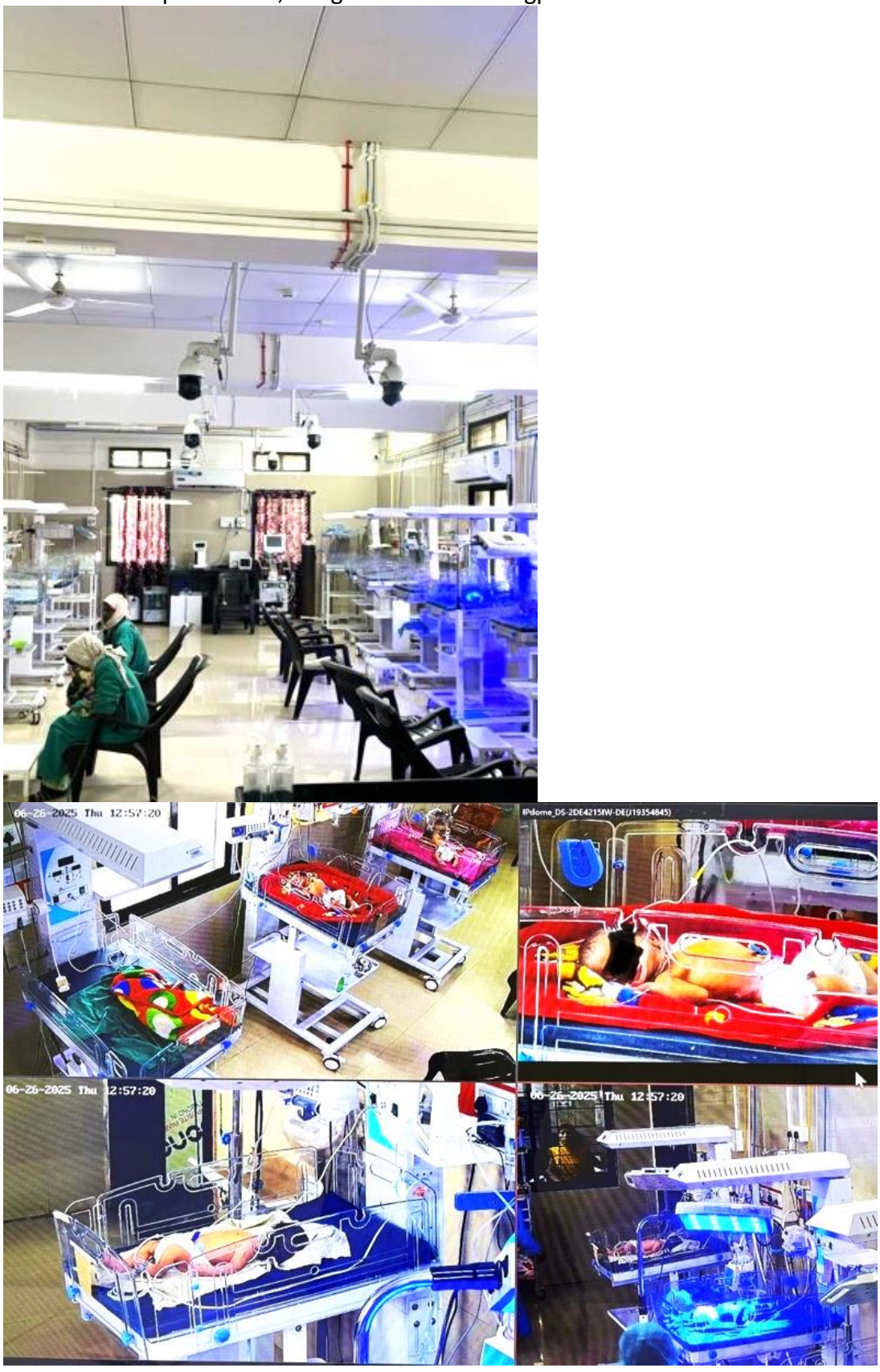
- Around 50% reduction in neonatal mortality
- Marked drop in neonatal sepsis deaths
- Improved survival among VLBW infants

Dr. Nishant Banait, Department of Neonatology, AIIMS Nagpur said that this model marks a true paradigm shift in how we deliver care to newborns. By combining cutting-edge digital tools with dedicated clinical care, we are not just saving lives but also, we are securing healthier futures for our most vulnerable patients.

AIIMS Nagpur has now extended its expertise to Gadchiroli and Nandurbar districts, where AIIMS team, recently completed a comprehensive SNCU facility assessment and initiated capacity-building efforts for healthcare workers.

AIIMS Nagpur's Tele-SNCU project was recognized as one of the best practices at the ***Conclave of Good Practices***, organized by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.** Held at AIIMS Nagpur, the event brought together Executive Directors from AIIMS institutions nationwide to share impactful healthcare initiatives.

1. AIIMS Nagpur is setting up a NIDAN Kendra in Gadchiroli to improve early detection of genetic and metabolic disorders. The centre will screen pregnant women for Sickle Cell Disease and Thalassemia, and test newborns for five key metabolic disorders at district hospitals.
2. AIIMS Nagpur's Community Medicine Department successfully conducted a large-scale NCD screening initiative in Ramtek block, covering 60 villages and around 45,000 people. Led by Dr. Kalaiselvi S under Dr. Pradeep Deshmukh, the program screened over 5,000 individuals aged 30+, identifying and treating 1,750 diabetes and hypertension patients. Notably, 900 patients shifted from private to government healthcare, reflecting improved trust and access to public health services.

Dr. P.P. Joshi, Executive Director AIIMS Nagpur said that leveraging technology to address health disparities in tribal populations is not just beneficial but it is transformative. Digital innovations are bridging gaps in access, enabling early diagnosis, and bringing quality healthcare to some of the most underserved communities.

Tele-SNCU setup at Dharni, Melghat and AIIMS Nagpur