

DEMCON'26 AT A GLANCE

1,034 attendees across the two-day conference	**110** invited faculty and contributors	**30** sessions across three halls	**85** poster presentations
21 oral presentations	**4** pre-conference workshops	**65** pre-conference workshop participants	**2** days of main conference, plus a pre-conference day

ABOUT DEMCON'26

A national gathering for the dementia and ageing ecosystem



DemCon'26 was the third edition of the Dementia Conference, hosted by Dementia India Alliance (DIA). It brought together stakeholders from across the dementia and ageing ecosystem in Chennai.

The theme, **'From Action to Acceleration'**, reflected India's readiness to move from building awareness, to



piloting promising approaches, to scaling solutions, strengthening systems and deepening partnerships in dementia care. The programme drew clinicians, researchers, mental health and allied health professionals, caregivers, policymakers, government representatives, service providers, students, technology and NGO representatives, and members of the public into a shared space for knowledge exchange, professional learning, consultation and dialogue.

Hosted by	Dementia India Alliance (DIA)
In collaboration with	Department of Health & Family Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu · Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF), through DEMCARES · Kshetra Assisted Living by Heritage ElderCare Services
Knowledge partner	National Centre for Ageing
In association with	National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) · Centre for Brain Research (CBR) · Institute of Human Behaviour & Allied Sciences (IHBAS) · Global Brain Health Institute (GBHI)
Development partner	Tata Trusts
Key sponsors	Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) · Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) · Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited (CPCL) · Lilly Medicine Company India · Athulya Senior Care
Venue	Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras Research Park, Kanagam, Tharamani, Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Main conference on the 6th and 7th floors of Block D.

HIGHLIGHTS

What DemCon'26 delivered

- **A policy milestone.** A Tamil Nadu Government Dementia Action Plan Meeting on the morning of 18 September produced a first draft of the State Dementia Action Plan, presented to the Hon'ble Health Minister at the inauguration.
- **A public commitment.** The Health Minister announced that dementia will be treated as a public health priority in Tamil Nadu, with a coordinated action plan to be developed with partners.



- **A broad, learning-focused audience.** 1,034 attendees, with students the largest group (366, or 35%), alongside doctors, allied and mental health professionals, researchers, government representatives, caregivers and service providers.
- **A full scientific programme.** 30 sessions, 21 oral presentations and 85 posters, from early diagnosis and biomarkers to financing, legal rights, stigma and policy.
- **A new regional institution introduced.** The South Asian Brain Health Institute (SABHI) held a programme design consultation and was publicly introduced to the conference audience.

THE DAYS AT A GLANCE

Day	Programme
Wed 17 Sept Pre-conference	Four pre-conference workshops at the National Centre for Ageing, Guindy
Fri 18 Sept Day 1	Morning: Tamil Nadu Government Dementia Action Plan Meeting From about 11:30 am: keynote addresses Afternoon: SABHI Programme Design Consultation 5:00 pm: formal inauguration, with the Hon'ble Health Minister as Chief Guest Evening: networking dinner at Taj Wellington
Sat 19 Sept Day 2	Scientific sessions across the halls Dedicated session: The Public Introduction of SABHI Tamil puppet show 4:30 pm: valedictory session, "United for Brain Health: A Shared Agenda for India"

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS · 17 SEPTEMBER

Skills first: four hands-on workshops

Four workshops at the National Centre for Ageing, Guindy, gave 65 participants focused, practice-oriented learning before the main conference began.

Workshop	Led by	Time	Participants
Cognitive Stimulation Therapy	Four staff members, DEMCARES (SCARF), Chennai	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	24
Palliative Care in Dementia	Five staff members, Saranam India, The Sheltr Foundation (integrated palliative care network, Bengaluru)	10:30 am – 1:30 pm	10
Dementia Screening & Risk Reduction	Dr. Ravikesh Tripathi, Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS, with four PhD students	2:30 – 4:00 pm	13
BPSD Management	Ms. Asha D'Souza, Lead Training, DIA	2:30 – 4:00 pm	18
Total participants			**65**









MAIN CONFERENCE · 18–19 SEPTEMBER

Two days across the dementia landscape

The programme ran across the 6th and 7th floors of Block D at IIT Madras Research Park. Three larger halls hosted the main sessions, with 110 invited faculty and contributors taking part as speakers, moderators, chairs and DIA staff leading sessions. A smaller hall was used for consultative and round-table meetings and oral presentations, and the corridors housed the poster exhibition.

30
sessions across the two days

21
oral presentations

85
poster presentations, with 43 displayed each day

Session format	Number
Symposia	14
Panel discussions	13
Fireside chat	1
Debate	1
Individual talk	1
Total sessions	**30**

The content ranged from early diagnosis, biomarkers, prevention, treatment and technology to caregiving, social care, senior living, workforce development, financing, insurance, legal rights, community and primary healthcare, stigma, lived experience and policy. By bringing together clinicians, researchers, caregivers, policymakers, industry and people with lived experience.

POLICY

Tamil Nadu Dementia Action Plan

On the morning of 18 September, a Tamil Nadu Government Dementia Action Plan Meeting was convened as part of the conference programme. It brought together relevant stakeholders to discuss and develop the **first draft of the State Dementia Action Plan**, which was presented to the Hon'ble Health Minister during the inauguration.

The draft plan was an important policy component of DemCon'26, linking the conference's discussions to the wider effort to strengthen dementia care within the state.

INAUGURATION AND KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

Dementia as a public health priority

The inaugural programme on 18 September ran later than scheduled. Two keynote addresses were delivered from about 11:30 am:

- **Dr. Pal Manickam, Gastroenterologist,** reflected on how we understand what is good for our health, and on the everyday behaviours and lifestyle choices that shape well-being. He emphasised the role of the gut microbiome in brain health, and the link between gut health and overall mental and physical well-being.





- **Mr. Bharat Lal, Former Secretary General & CEO, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India,** spoke on why dementia must be recognised as a public health priority, a social development priority and a human rights priority.

The formal inauguration followed at 5:00 pm, with **Dr. K. G. Arunraj, Hon'ble Minister for Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu,** as Chief Guest.

> *Dementia will be treated as a public health priority.*

In his address, the Minister announced a major policy shift. He said the State government would work with its partners to develop and implement a coordinated action plan targeting early identification, screening, care pathways and research, and committed to making Tamil Nadu a dementia-friendly state by integrating responsive services into the existing public healthcare infrastructure. He stressed the need to reduce the stigma surrounding dementia, to train frontline healthcare workers such as doctors and community health workers, and to provide robust support systems for family caregivers.



PARTICIPATION

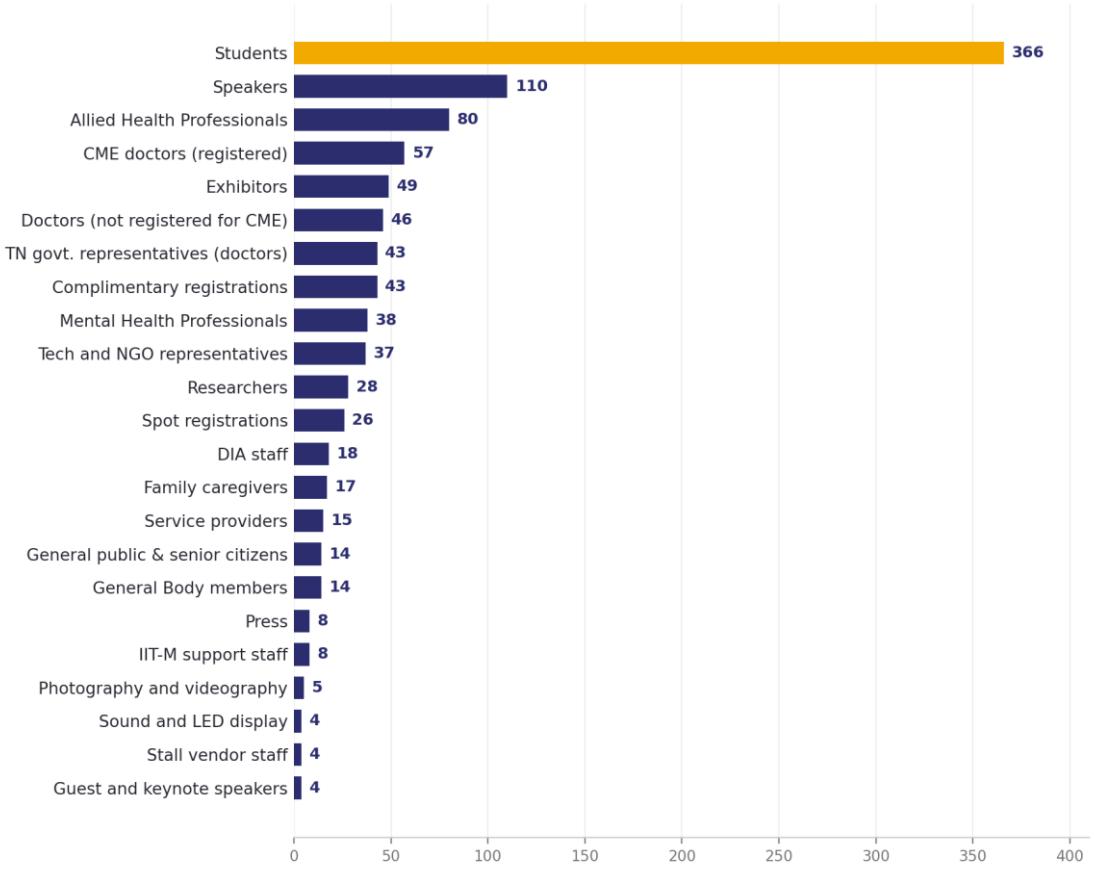
1,034 attendees

The mix of attendees reflected the interdisciplinary nature of DemCon'26: students and professionals alongside government representatives, researchers, caregivers, service providers, technology and NGO





representatives, exhibitors and members of the public. Students were the largest single group at 366 (35% of all attendees).



Attendees by registration category (n = 1,034). The full table is in the Annex.

SOUTH ASIAN BRAIN HEALTH INSTITUTE

SABHI: consultation and public introduction

SABHI was another important strand of the conference. A **SABHI Programme Design Consultation** on the afternoon of 18 September gave stakeholders a chance to discuss the programme's design and priorities. On 19 September, SABHI was formally introduced to the wider conference audience in a dedicated session, **"The Public Introduction of SABHI: Building Brain Health Leaders in South Asia."**



NETWORKING AND CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

Connecting beyond the sessions

- **Networking dinner, 18 September.** Hosted at Taj Wellington, it gave invited speakers and participants an informal setting to connect, exchange experiences and strengthen professional relationships.
- **Tamil puppet show, 19 September.** Organised by Dr. Anuradha Pichumani of Sree Ranga Hospital, a DIA outreach partner, it offered a locally rooted way of engaging audiences on dementia and ageing, in keeping with the conference's emphasis on culture, communication and community engagement.

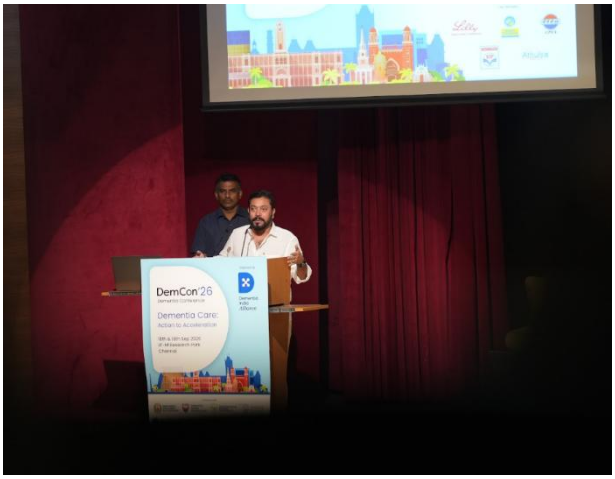




VALEDICTORY SESSION

United for Brain Health: A Shared Agenda for India

The conference closed at 4:30 pm on 19 September. The Chief Guest was **Mr. A. Srinath, Hon'ble Minister for Fisheries and Fishermen Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu,** who is also an actor.



He spoke about how public representation and storytelling shape the way society understands and responds to dementia, and stressed that the way dementia is portrayed strongly influences how people living with the condition are perceived and treated. He said public awareness must go beyond posters and programmes to help families find answers to practical, day-to-day questions, and called for better resources to help families identify early symptoms, seek professional medical help and support their loved ones.

The session closed the conference by reinforcing the importance of collective action across public awareness, early identification, professional care, family support and community engagement.