



Schooling young researchers in marine pharmacology

The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute is all set to open a 21-day Winter School on 'recent advances in bioactive compounds from marine organisms'

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With an aim to expand the research network towards exploring the fortunes of highly prospective marine organisms for the development of promising therapeutic agents against various diseases, the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) is all set to open a 21-day Winter School. At the school, which begins from Tuesday, young researchers will be trained in the latest technologies in the area.

Organised by the Marine Biotechnology division of CMFRI, the Winter School on 'recent advances in bioactive compounds from marine organisms' will be attended by 25 researchers and officials from various institutes under the Indian Council of



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- Dr A Gopalakrishnan, director, CMFRI

Agricultural Research (ICAR) and the universities from across the country. Training will be provided to budding researchers on various research aspects for developing medicines and other

nutraceutical products from the sea. The training includes isolation and characterisation of natural products of pharmaceutical importance from marine organisms such as seaweeds,

molluscs, sponges, coelenterates, etc.

Dr Manju Sharma, biotechnologist and former secretary of Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, will inaugurate the Winter School at 10.30 am on Tuesday. Renowned scientists and experts in the area of marine natural product chemistry from across the globe will lead the technical training sessions at the Winter School.

CMFRI director A Gopalakrishnan said, "There is a growing demand for new bioactive compounds of marine natural origin in pharmaceutical fields."

He said CMFRI is the pioneering marine research institute to work in the frontier area of marine bio-prospecting molecule discovery, marine food product technology and develop-

ment of high-value nutraceutical products such as dietary and health management supplements.

"The institute has already developed and commercialised various nutraceutical products for various diseases such as diabetes, arthritis, cholesterol and obesity. In addition, several products from marine organisms as promising therapeutic agents against diseases such as thyroid are in pipeline," Gopalakrishnan said.

CMFRI's training programme will help participants formulate strategies for further research in the area. This will pave the way for an upsurge of research on marine bioprospecting in the respective laboratories and various institutes of the participants, he said.

Medicines from sea

The modern-day focus of marine pharmacology is on microbes. This includes the discovery of new pharmaceutical candidates from marine microbes. The ocean provides enormous opportunities to discover new compounds as it has more than 13,000 molecules described out of which 3,000 are having active properties. Marine natural products are generally secondary metabolites. They are not generated by biological or regular metabolic pathways.