Heading- **Psychiatry Faculty Dr. Natarajan Varadharajan Receives Award for Emerging Leader in Mental Health**

Dr. Natarajan Varadharajan, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER), Puducherry, was honoured as the **inaugural recipient of the STELAR Award for Emerging Leader in Mental Health 2026**, conferred by the **Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF), India** — a WHO Collaborating Centre for Mental Health Research and Training. He was felicitated at **ICONS 2026** (International Conference on Schizophrenia), SCARF's flagship annual international mental health conference, on **20 August 2026**.

The STELAR Award was instituted by **Dr. Thara Rangaswamy**, co-founder and Vice Chairperson of SCARF — one of India's most distinguished psychiatrists and a pioneer in community mental health care. Dr. Thara is a recipient of the **Nari Shakti Puraskar (2021)**, the Government of India's highest civilian honour for women, awarded for her outstanding contributions to mental health care. In a remarkable gesture of reinvestment into the field, she dedicated the entirety of this award to institute the STELAR Award — ensuring that national recognition flows back into nurturing the next generation of mental health leaders.

Dr. Natarajan was selected through a competitive evaluation across five criteria — Vision and Innovation, Measurable Impact, Leadership and Collaboration, Values Alignment, and Public Engagement. In the words of SCARF, his selection reflects his dedication to innovation, research, and compassionate care — the future of mental health leadership.