

Dr. Beena Pillai is a molecular biologist and RNA researcher whose work explores how non-coding RNAs shape neuronal development, behaviour, and disease. She currently serves as Director of BRIC-Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology and previously led the GRiN (Gene Regulation in Neurobiology) Lab at CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology. Her research spans RNA biology, neurodevelopment, neurodegeneration, polyglutamine disorders, regenerative biology, and gene regulation in the nervous system.

Dr. Pillai completed her integrated MS–PhD at the Indian Institute of Science and has since built an interdisciplinary research program combining genomics, molecular neuroscience, zebrafish biology, and functional non-coding RNA studies. Her work has contributed to understanding microRNAs and long non-coding RNAs in neuronal function and dysfunction, and her publications are widely cited internationally.

A recipient of several prestigious honours, she has been awarded the CSIR Young Scientist Award, the INSA Young Scientist Medal, and the National Bioscience Award for Career Development for her contributions to biosciences and RNA biology.

Beyond the laboratory, Dr. Pillai is deeply engaged in science communication and public outreach. She has worked extensively to make modern biology and genomics accessible to students, teachers, and the public through lectures, popular science writing, interviews, educational outreach programs, and media interactions. She is associated with several initiatives promoting scientific temper, hands-on biology education, and public engagement with science, especially among young learners. Her talks and interviews frequently address the social relevance of biotechnology, genetics, and scientific thinking in contemporary society.