



## **INDIAN COUNCIL OF MEDICAL RESEARCH**

Department of Health Research – Ministry of Health & Family Welfare  
Government of India

**Media report (4 January to 11 January)**  
**(ICMR IN NEWS)**

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## **HEADLINES**



### **Draft of essential diagnostics list out for public comments**

January 4, 2019/Business Standard

### **India Asks CDC to Withdraw Zika Travel Alert**

January 4, 2019/precision vaccinations

### **Minister claims no data for pollution-related deaths in India, studies say otherwise**

January 5, 2019/Down to Earth

### **Intellectually challenged persons have right to live with dignity, says SC judge**

January 5, 2019/The Hindu

### **10-20% of afflicted Delhiites get psychiatric treatment: ICMR**

January 7, 2019/the Pioneer

### **Experts share opinions about non-communicable diseases**

January 7, 2019/The Tribune

### **Cancer Patients To Double By 2030 In India**

January 7, 2019/Star of Mysore

### **India asks US to 'withdraw or modify' travel advisory over Zika outbreak**

January 8, 2019/The Times of India

### **India asks US to 'withdraw or modify' travel advisory over Zika outbreak**

January 8, 2019/Business Standard

### **India states Zika outbreak has subsided**

January 8, 2019/ITIJ

### **How a Rogue Chinese Experiment Might Affect Gene-Based Therapies in India**

January 9, 2019/The Wire

### **Take up travel alert issue on Zika virus with US: Rajasthan to Centre**

January 9, 2019/The Times of India

### **India asks US to 'withdraw or modify' travel advisory over Zika outbreak**

January 9, 2019/ET Healthworld

### **IISc study finds malarial parasites in wild Indian monkeys**

January 10, 2019/Research Matter

### **Government to tweak solatium clause in clinical trials**

January 11, 2019/Live Mint

### **Draft of essential diagnostics list out for public comments**

January 4, 2019/Business Standard

A new list of essential diagnostics has been formulated by the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** to enhance accessibility to diagnostic tests and reduce out-of-pocket expenditure, Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel told the Lok Sabha Friday. The National Essential Diagnostics List (EDL) has been drafted after consultation with policymakers, clinicians, laboratories, functionaries in national health programmes; manufacturers and innovators. The list is now available on the ICMR website and open for comments till January 31, 2019. "The move is aimed to attain universal healthcare and the list prescribes standard of requirement of minimum distance to a healthcare facility, equipments, skilled health workers, accessibility to diagnostic tests and also reducing out-of-pocket expenditure on this account, by promoting research and development for new, appropriate and effective diagnostics," Patel said in reply to a question. The finalised list will be reviewed by an expert group for updating and planing the implementation, on the lines of the National Essential Medicines List. Prices for these EDL may only be fixed after finalisation and approval of the list, Patel said.

### **India Asks CDC to Withdraw Zika Travel Alert**

January 4, 2019/precision vaccinations

A strong rebuttal has been issued by **Dr. Balram Bhargava, Secretary, Department of Health Research, Indian Council of Medical Research**, regarding a Zika Travel Alert issued by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) on December 14, 2018. Dr. Bhargava has 'asked' the CDC to "withdraw or modify" its Zika travel alert, reports The India Express. "We have sent a rebuttal to CDC along with all research done on the Zika strain in India, the cases reported, measures taken etc. We have told them to withdraw or modify the alert," Dr. Bhargava told The Indian Express. Dr. Bhargava took strong exception to the use of the word "endemic" especially when Zika outbreaks in the country have been localized and contained within small geographic areas. The December 2018 Level 2 Travel Alert, Practice Enhanced Precaution, says Public health officials in India have reported an unusual increase in the number of confirmed Zika cases in Rajasthan and surrounding states. Rajasthan recorded its first case of Zika virus infection after a woman tested positive in Jaipur, on September 22, 2018. Rajasthan is a northwestern Indian state of approximately 68 million people, bordering the country of Pakistan. 'Given a large number of international travelers, it is critical that Zika prevention messaging, surveillance and outreach continue, especially as it pertains to women traveling while pregnant," said the CDC.

## Minister claims no data for pollution-related deaths in India, studies say otherwise

January 5, 2019/Down to Earth

The Union minister of environment, forest and climate change, Dr Harsh Vardhan, said in Parliament on Friday that there is no conclusive data available in the country to establish direct correlation of death/disease exclusively to air pollution. Incidentally, a study done by the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** That functions under the Union health and family welfare ministry was released only last month. “We report that one out of every eight deaths in India in 2017 could be attributed to air pollution. The results show that India has a higher proportion of global health loss due to air pollution than its proportion of the global population,” says the study. The study, titled, 'Impact of air pollution on deaths, disease burden and life expectancy across the states of India' also says that the average life expectancy in the country would have been 1.7 years higher if the air pollution level was less than the minimal level. It was touted as first such comprehensive study that measures the health impact of air pollution. The report even detailed state-wise burden—Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Haryana recorded highest number of deaths

## Intellectually challenged persons have right to live with dignity, says SC judge

January 5, 2019/The Hindu

*ICMR research shows that in Delhi 8%-10% of population suffers from illnesses like depression, anxiety and schizophrenia among others, with only 10-20% getting treatment*

Supreme Court judge Justice A. K. Sikri on Saturday raised concerns about the rights of persons with mental illness citing an incident of an asylum in Uttar Pradesh where many intellectually challenged persons were chained.

He said: “This is happening in 2019 where we are talking about legal rights of the intellectually challenged persons. It is no more a health issue now.... it is an issue of their human rights as they are not getting a suitable environment which they need. They have the right to live like any other person.”

They are also citizens of this country and have the right to live with dignity, he said, adding that their rights to live have been violated by the authorities itself.

### **National seminar**

Justice Sikri was speaking at the two-day national seminar on “homeless and other unreached persons with mental illness”, which began in the Capital.

Speaking at the seminar, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said: “If a person is studying in top institutes like IIT, then the student should not forget to contribute to the society. Now, the time has come when we need to give back at least something to the society.”

## 10-20% of afflicted Delhiites get psychiatric treatment: ICMR

January 7, 2019/the Pioneer



Notwithstanding greater awareness about mental illness, only 10 to 20 per cent of the affected population in the national Capital receives psychiatric treatment and many of them are homeless, revealed a research conducted by **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**. The revelation was made during a National Seminar for Homeless & Other Unreached Persons with Mental Illnesses (PMIs).

Speaking at the Seminar, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said, “Around 80 per cent people fall sick due to mental disorder and rest 20 per cent are because of other problems. The major issue of the mental disorder is the greed and that is the area where we need to work.” Highlighting the practice of ignorance in the society, he said, “Mental illness’ issue is that a particular person thinks that only I have done for the society. If a person is studying in eminent institutes like (the) IIT, then, he/she should not forget the contribution of the society. Now, the time has come when we need to give back at least something to the society.”

The Minister also pointed out to the growing problem of people spending their major time on social media instead of interacting with each other in person.

Similarly, Supreme Court judge Justice AK Sikri raising a concern about the rights of persons with mental illness, saying it was an issue of their human rights and they had a right to live with dignity.

## Experts share opinions about non-communicable diseases

January 7, 2019/The Tribune

Various experts shared their views during a plenary session on non-communicable diseases at the LPU during the 106th Science Congress at the LPU near here.

Dr Prashant Mathur, **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**, communicated his thoughts on non-communicable diseases. He said challenging issues of health and development that have beset society at large continue to linger. However, the bull has to be taken by its horns to get free from the yoke of tobacco and alcohol consumption and diseases stemming from these vices. What is more, the conspicuous presence of affordable medicines would help to strike the evil at its roots. Arguably, the World Health Assembly has envisaged a three-pronged strategy to reduce the tobacco and alcohol consumption by 30 and 10 per cent, respectively, besides aiming 80 per cent availability of affordable medicines in the country. The noticeable feature of the session was the proposed STEMI model, with the collaboration of the ICMR, World Health Organisation and the Ministry of Health, to check incidents of cardiac arrests. During a lecture of Dr JK Jena, Deputy Director General, Fisheries Science and Animal Science, ICAR, highlighted how various innovative and scientific methods of breeding fish were rendering the desired results. He said there was a good potential for further development of fish breeding in inland-saline areas of the state.

## Cancer Patients To Double By 2030 In India

January 7, 2019/Star of Mysore

The Managing Trustee of Sri Shankara Cancer Hospital and Research Centre, Bengaluru, Dr. B.S. Srinath cautioned that cancer patients are likely to double by 2030 in the country if proper preventive measures are not taken as per World Health Organisation (WHO) reports. He was speaking after inaugurating a one-day free health check-up and public awareness camp, organised jointly by Asare

Foundation, GSS, Safe Wheels and Vaishnavi Sweets, at Vokkaligara Samudaya Bhavan in Vidyaranyapuram here yesterday. He said that India had 17.3 lakh cancer patients as per WHO and **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** data, and estimated more than 8.8 lakh deaths due to the disease by 2020 and this number is expected to double by the year 2030 as per reports. The most common kinds of cancer cases found in India are stomach cancer (9 percent), breast cancer (8.2 percent), lung cancer (7.5 percent), lip and oral cavity cancer (7.2 percent), pharynx cancer other than nasopharynx (6.8 percent), colon and rectum cancer (5.8 percent), leukaemia (5.2 percent), and cervical cancer (5.2 percent). Stating that cancer is the second biggest killer in India after heart disease, he said that a study conducted by WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer had shown that cancer will claim 9.6 million lives in the world this year and India's share in it will be a worrying 8.17 percent.



### [India asks US to 'withdraw or modify' travel advisory over Zika outbreak](#)

January 8, 2019/The Times of India

NEW DELHI: The government has urged the US to "withdraw or modify" its advisory against travelling in India, which was issued after Zika cases were reported in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, saying the outbreak has subsided. The US government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last month advised pregnant women against travelling to areas with risk of Zika in India. Raising concern over the advisory, **Director General of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Dr Balram Bhargava**, said it has created an impression that the outbreak of the disease is still continuing. "I wish to bring to your attention that Zika virus outbreak in both Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have now subsided completely. There are no reports of fresh cases and vector indices are also well within acceptable limits. "I urge you to take up the matter with the concerned authorities at CDC and withdraw/modify the travel advisory," Bhargava said in the letter. In a note attached to the letter, Bhargava mentioned that multiple human and vector samples tested from affected areas confirm the absence of any active transmission of Zika virus.

### [India asks US to 'withdraw or modify' travel advisory over Zika outbreak](#)

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## [India states Zika outbreak has subsided](#)

January 8, 2019/ITIJ

News sources have reported that India has asked the US to withdraw or modify a travel advisory that was previously issued over an outbreak of Zika. In December, the US Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advised women against travelling to areas with risk of Zika in India. The advisory said: “Pregnant women should NOT travel to areas with risk of Zika because Zika infection during pregnancy can cause serious birth defects.” Cases of Zika were reported in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh but the Indian Government now says that the outbreak has subsided. **Director General of Indian Council of Medical Research Dr Balram Bhargava** said that the advisory suggests that the disease outbreak is ongoing. He said: “I wish to bring to your attention that Zika virus outbreak in both Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have now subsided completely. There are no reports of fresh cases and vector indices are also well within acceptable limits. I urge you to take up the matter with the concerned authorities at CDC and withdraw/modify the travel advisory.” Dr Bhargava also said that multiple human and vector samples tested from affected areas confirm the absence of any active transmission of Zika virus.

## [How a Rogue Chinese Experiment Might Affect Gene-Based Therapies in India](#)

January 9, 2019/The Wire

The gene-editing tool CRISPR Cas9 became a talking point among biologists after He Jiankui, a Chinese researcher, announced he had edited the genomes of two babies in November. In a YouTube video, Jiankui explained he had cut the CCR5 gene out to make them resistant to HIV. The episode set off a furore in the international biologists community. The genetic editing of human embryos is banned in most of the world. This is partly because scientists are still learning how to use CRISPR to do this. “CRISPR has certainly made gene-editing easier, but the strategy is not entirely foolproof and may sometimes introduce mistakes at unintended positions” of the genome, Debojyoti Chakraborty, a scientist at the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, New Delhi, told The Wire. What these off-target changes could cause remains uncharted territory.

Sonam Mehrotra, a scientist at the Advanced Centre for Treatment, Research and Education in Cancer, Mumbai, said, “From practical experience, I can tell you that the outcome of CRISPR varies between cases.” Mehrotra uses CRISPR to deliberately introduce mutations in fruit flies (*Drosophila melanogaster*). Given the vagaries of working with flies, whose genomes are much smaller, she thinks it’s way too early to edit human embryos. In India, the ethical guidelines of the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** disallow any research related to germline genetic engineering or reproductive cloning. But editing the genomes of adult human cells is permissible subject to approval by an ethics committee.

In administrative terms, “we have three levels of regulation,” S.R Rao, senior advisor to the Department of Biotechnology, said at a talk at the second International Summit on Human Genome Editing. It was held in Hong Kong in the last week of November 2018, and counted Jiankui among its participants.

## [Take up travel alert issue on Zika virus with US: Rajasthan to Centre](#)

January 9, 2019/The Times of India



The state government has written to ministry of external affairs urging it to take up matter with the US for withdrawing travel advisory against travelling to Rajasthan after it reported cases of Zika. **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** has also raised the issue urging the US to withdraw it. "We have written to the Centre to take up the issue with the US agencies to withdraw the travel advisory against visiting Rajasthan and India as no case of Zika has been reported since October 28," said Dr Ravi Prakash Mathur, additional director (rural health), health department. "Presently situation is "totally under control" and there is no need for any Travel Advisory as issued by Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, USA. I would request you to take up this matter with appropriate authorities as this is important and may have adversely effect on tourists visiting city of Jaipur during this season," additional chief secretary Rohit Kumar Singh wrote in a letter to ministry of external affairs secretary Vijay Keshav Gokhale.

## [India asks US to 'withdraw or modify' travel advisory over Zika outbreak](#)

January 9, 2019/ET Healthworld

NEW DELHI: The government has urged the US to "withdraw or modify" its advisory against travelling in India, which was issued after Zika cases were reported in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, saying the outbreak has subsided. The US government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last month advised pregnant women against travelling to areas with risk of Zika in India. Raising concern over the advisory, **Director General of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Dr Balram Bhargava**, said it has created an impression that the outbreak of the disease is still continuing. "I wish to bring to your attention that Zika virus outbreak in both Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have now subsided completely. There are no reports of fresh cases and vector indices are also well within acceptable limits. "I urge you to take up the matter with the concerned authorities at CDC and withdraw/modify the travel advisory," Bhargava said in the letter. In a note attached to the letter, Bhargava mentioned that multiple human and vector samples tested from affected areas confirm the absence of any active transmission of Zika virus.

## [IISc study finds malarial parasites in wild Indian monkeys](#)

January 10, 2019/Research Matter

In India, monkeys have a special place—although they run amok in our neighbourhoods, much to the annoyance of people, they are worshipped as gods by a few. Sometimes, these monkeys carry deadly diseases, like the 'monkey fever' or the Kyasanur forest disease. In a first, a study by researchers from the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, and the Kerala Forest Department, has reported the presence of the human malaria parasite, *Plasmodium falciparum*, in two species of Indian monkeys. Malaria is a disease caused by the parasite *Plasmodium*. It uses mosquitoes and humans as hosts and is known to switch hosts from non-human primates to humans. So far, the *Plasmodium* species found in monkeys were not found in humans, but there have been cases in the past where humans were infected with malaria parasites found in monkeys, called simian malaria parasites. In this study, the researchers have analysed the genetic

information of the Indian simian malaria parasites. The study was published in the journal PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases and was funded by the **Indian Council of Medical Research**, Delhi, and the Department of Biotechnology.



### [Government to tweak solatium clause in clinical trials](#)

January 11, 2019/Live Mint

The government has decided to remove a clause in the draft clinical trials rules that mandate the sponsor (the entity initiating the trial) to pay 60% of compensation upfront in case of death or permanent disability of the patient, in a major relief for pharmaceutical companies. An amendment in the draft rules will state that companies would pay the total amount once it is proven that the injury occurred because of the trial.

“The government has decided to do away with the advance payment of 60%, which was earlier part of the draft rules. Instead, it has been decided that the sponsor may pay the full amount only after it is proven that the trial resulted in the injury or death,” said a person aware of matter. The Union health ministry’s proposal made in February last year included a mandate for the company to pay, within 15 days, 60% of the compensation if a person dies or suffers a permanent disability in the course of a trial.

“If a trial subject suffered from permanent disability or died during a clinical trial or bioavailability study or bioequivalence study, the sponsor would have to pay 60% of the compensation within 15 days of the opinion of ethics committee,” the draft rules had stated. The move to do away with 60% compensation upfront has been made in the wake of opposition from the international health agency World Health Organization (WHO) and concerns emerging in the government over this clause, with the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** raising objections.

With regards,

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