

ICMR eases safety trial rules for Ayush medicines in integrative research

On 5th March 2025, The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) issued new guidelines stating that Ayush-approved medicines used in integrative research would not require additional safety trials or preclinical studies. However, non-codified traditional medicines would still need to undergo the full regulatory approval process. The announcement came as ICMR released an addendum to its National Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical and Health Research Involving Human Participants (2017), aiming to strengthen the scientific foundation of Ayush-based integrative healthcare. The addendum ensured ethical rigor and regulatory compliance in research combining traditional and modern medicine.

Under the new guidelines, Ethics Committees overseeing such research were required to include two Ayush subject-matter experts, one of whom had to be external to the institution. Informed consent protocols were also enhanced, ensuring participants received clear information about integrative interventions. Research compliance had to align with the Drugs and Cosmetics Act (1940), New Drugs & Clinical Trial Rules (2019), and Good Clinical Practice (GCP) guidelines specific to Ayush systems.

The Ministry of Ayush emphasised that these guidelines would provide a structured ethical framework for researchers, institutions, and regulatory bodies. Secretary Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha highlighted that this step encouraged credible and evidence-based integration of traditional and modern medicine, promoting safe and scientifically validated healthcare solutions.





CII organises Future Forward forum in Delhi

On 21st March 2025, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), in collaboration with the Gates Foundation and the Women's Collective Forum, organized the "Future Forward" forum in New Delhi. Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, attended the event and praised India's leadership in innovation and sustainability. He highlighted the country's remarkable advancements in affordable healthcare, AI-driven diagnostics, and digital public infrastructure, emphasizing its role as a global frontrunner in these critical areas.

He acknowledged that India was not only addressing its own healthcare challenges but was also developing scalable solutions with the potential to impact global health and development. Gates cited initiatives such as Ayushman Bharat, digital financial inclusion, and AI-powered agricultural solutions as examples of how policy and technology alignment fostered sustainable progress. He emphasized that India's low-cost innovations had positioned the country as a model for emerging economies worldwide.

Reaffirming the Gates Foundation's commitment, he expressed confidence in scaling India's advancements in AI, healthcare, and sustainable development to address global challenges. Smriti Irani, Chairperson of the Alliance for Global Good Gender Equity and Equality, commended Gates and his foundation for their transformative investments, stating that their contributions were reshaping societies. Gates' remarks underscored India's growing influence in pioneering innovative solutions with worldwide applicability.



Ayush Ministry launches awareness drive for heatwave prevention

On 21st March 2025, the Ayush Ministry launched a nationwide sensitisation drive to raise awareness about heatwave prevention in response to rising temperatures and the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issuing advisories to various regions. Various institutions under the ministry conducted awareness sessions and educational activities to inform citizens about protective measures. The initiative emphasized traditional wellness practices backed by scientific evidence to help people stay safe during extreme heat.

The Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda (ITRA) in Jamnagar organized an awareness event on March 20, distributing bilingual pamphlets with practical heatwave prevention tips. Dr. Jayprakash Ram delivered a lecture on heatwave awareness at RARI Ahmedabad, engaging OPD patients and staff in discussions. Similarly, Dr. Preeti from the Central Research Institute of Yoga and Naturopathy in Jhajjar educated participants on using yoga and naturopathy for heat protection.

The Ayush Ministry also issued a public health advisory recommending hydration, cooling drinks like coconut water and lemon juice, and avoiding direct sunlight. It advised consuming cooling foods such as cucumber, watermelon, and 'sattu' while cautioning against alcohol, caffeine, and carbonated drinks. The advisory stressed wearing loose cotton clothing, avoiding outdoor activities during peak heat hours, ensuring proper ventilation while cooking, and never leaving children or pets in parked vehicles.



Health department unveils online portal to promote gender equality

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr. Pankaj Kumar Singh launched the PC&PNDT online portal on 21st March 2025 during a one-day workshop focused on effectively implementing the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC&PNDT) Act. The initiative aimed to digitize and modernize the enforcement of the Act, enhancing transparency and efficiency. Officials stated that the portal would replace manual operations with a digital framework, ensuring better oversight and compliance by registered facilities while preventing unauthorized use of ultrasound technology for gender determination.

During the launch at Delhi Secretariat, Dr. Singh reiterated the administration's commitment to gender equality and protecting girl children. He commended departmental staff for implementing the digital solution and emphasised its role in improving Delhi's sex ratio, which had declined from 929 females per 1,000 males in 2022 to 922 in 2023—lower than the national average of 940. He stressed that Delhi must set an example in eliminating sex determination and expressed confidence that the initiative would help improve the sex ratio while combating gender-based discrimination. He also directed officials to take strict action on complaints received through the portal.

A website was designed to offer key services such as digital form F submission for ultrasound facilities, public complaint registration, enforcement tracking, and live compliance status updates.

WHO urges urgent investment to strengthen TB care on World Tuberculosis Day

On World Tuberculosis Day 2025, observed on 24th March 2025, the World Health Organisation (WHO) called for urgent investment to sustain TB care and support services worldwide. Despite saving 79 million lives since 2000, global efforts against TB faced severe setbacks due to funding cuts, rising drug resistance, and ongoing conflicts. WHO highlighted that 27 high-burden countries, particularly in Africa, South-East Asia, and the Western Pacific, experienced critical disruptions, including shortages of healthcare workers, delayed diagnostics, failing TB drug supply chains, and collapsing data systems.

The campaign theme, “Yes! We Can End TB: Commit, Invest, Deliver,” emphasised accountability and action. WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stressed the need to uphold commitments made at the UN General Assembly. Reports indicated that only 26% of the \$22 billion required for TB prevention and care in 2023 was available, while TB research remained underfunded. In response, WHO and the Civil Society Task Force issued a joint statement urging global leaders to address disruptions, secure sustainable funding, and strengthen surveillance.

Additionally, WHO introduced new guidance on integrating TB and lung health into primary healthcare. It urged governments, donors, and communities to act decisively, warning that failure to do so could reverse decades of progress and endanger millions of lives.





Indore adopts drone technology to eradicate malaria by 2030

On 23rd March 2025, Indore has categorised cities into four groups based on malaria cases to eliminate the vector-borne disease by 2030. Agar-Malwa was placed in Category 0, while Indore fell under Category 1 after reporting seven malaria cases in 2024. Indore district malaria officer Daulat Patel explained that India's states are classified from 0 to 3, with Category 0 representing those with no malaria cases. Madhya Pradesh was currently in Category 1, with four districts—Vidisha, Tikamgarh, Harda, and Agar-Malwa—achieving Category 0 by reporting zero malaria cases.

Despite Indore's seven malaria cases, the district recorded around 550 dengue cases in the previous year. These figures were presented during a state-level review meeting held in Indore to assess vector-borne diseases and discuss strategies for malaria elimination. Officials aligned their efforts with the World Health Organization's (WHO) 2030 target and explored innovative approaches for disease control.

Indore's use of drone technology for dengue prevention was showcased through a documentary, earning praise from the State Program Officer and the Chief Medical and Health Officer. Senior officials suggested that malaria elimination efforts should focus on enhanced surveillance, effective vector control, timely diagnosis and treatment, community engagement, and intersectoral collaboration. They also recommended expanding the use of drone technology to identify and eliminate mosquito breeding sites across other districts.

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare takes necessary step to strengthen public healthcare infrastructure in rural areas

On 26th March 2025, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, under the National Health Mission (NHM), provided technical and financial support to States and Union Territories (UTs) to strengthen public healthcare infrastructure in rural areas. This included measures to retain healthcare professionals based on Programme Implementation Plans (PIPs) submitted by states. Financial approvals were granted through Records of Proceedings (RoPs) as per established norms and available resources.

To encourage healthcare professionals, particularly female practitioners, to work in rural and remote areas, NHM offered incentives such as hard area allowances for specialist doctors and support for residential quarters. Honorariums were provided to gynaecologists, paediatricians, and anaesthetists trained in Life-Saving Anaesthesia Skills (LSAS) to improve specialist availability for critical procedures. States had the flexibility to negotiate salaries through the “You Quote, We Pay” strategy and offered non-monetary incentives like preferential admission to postgraduate courses.

Additionally, NHM supported the multi-skilling of doctors and upgrading human resource skills to address specialist shortages. Beyond NHM, initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) focused on enhancing public health investments, strengthening Health and Wellness Centres, and expanding critical care facilities. The Fifteenth Finance Commission (FC-XV) recommended grants for local governments to further develop grassroots healthcare systems.



India sees sharp decline in out-of-pocket health expenses

On 26th March 2025, the National Health Accounts (NHA) Estimates reported a significant decline in out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE) on healthcare in India, dropping from 62.6% in 2014-15 to 39.4% in 2021-22. Simultaneously, government health expenditure (GHE) increased from 29.0% to 48.0% during the same period. To reduce OOPE and improve healthcare access, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare implemented various national schemes. The National Health Mission (NHM) supported states in strengthening healthcare infrastructure, ensuring the availability of medical professionals, and providing free essential medicines and diagnostic services. Under this initiative, 1.76 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AAMs) were established in rural and urban areas to offer primary healthcare services.

The Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) aimed to enhance healthcare systems and prepare for emerging diseases with an outlay of ₹64,180 crore. The Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) provided ₹5 lakh annual health coverage to 55 crore individuals. Recently, six crore senior citizens aged 70 and above were also included under the Vay Vandana Card.

Additionally, affordable medicine initiatives, including the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) and AMRIT pharmacy stores, ensured access to cost-effective healthcare solutions. These details were shared by Union Minister Anupriya Patel in the Rajya Sabha.



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