

ICMR study finds breast and cervical cancers dominate among Indian women

On 20th August 2025, a study conducted by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Tata Memorial Centre revealed that breast and cervical cancers were the most common among Indian women, while oral and lung cancers dominated among men. The study analysed more than 700,000 cancer cases and over 200,000 cancer-related deaths across 43 registries, estimating that India recorded 1.56 million new cancer cases in 2024, up from 1.49 million in 2023.

The findings showed sharp regional disparities in incidence and mortality. Breast cancer rates were highest in Hyderabad (54 per 100,000) and Bengaluru (48.7 per 100,000), while cervical cancer remained widespread in rural areas. Among men, lung cancer incidence peaked in Srinagar (39.5 per 100,000), and oral cancers were alarmingly high in Ahmedabad (33.6 per 100,000) and Bhopal (30.4 per 100,000).

The report also highlighted high mortality-to-incidence ratios, reflecting late diagnoses and limited access to treatment. In Sangrur and Varanasi, oral cancer mortality nearly matched incidence, while lung cancer deaths were severe in Chandigarh. Experts noted that with India's lifetime cancer risk at 11%, and much higher in states like Mizoram, the evidence highlights the urgent need for targeted prevention, awareness, and early detection strategies.





PM Narendra Modi flags obesity as a major health challenge for India

On 15th August 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his address to the nation from the Red Fort on the 79th Independence Day, said obesity had emerged as a major health challenge for the country and urged citizens to take collective action to combat it. He cautioned that experts had warned that one in every three Indians could suffer from obesity in the coming years. Emphasizing lifestyle changes, he reiterated his earlier suggestion that families should buy and consume 10 per cent less cooking oil as a simple step toward healthier living.

The prime minister noted that obesity posed a crisis for families across India and stressed the importance of taking it seriously as part of the broader fitness and sports movement. He further highlighted the role of the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana in improving healthcare access, stating that it had freed people from silently enduring illnesses and enabled them to seek quality treatment. He pointed out that providing financial support of over ₹5,00,000 to senior citizens for medical needs reflected the government's commitment to their well-being. He also emphasized India's growing capacity in pharmaceutical innovation and urged researchers and entrepreneurs to secure patents, strengthen medical self-reliance, and position India as a global leader in healthcare solutions.



Parliamentary panel urges faster rollout of HPV vaccine under Universal Immunisation Programme

On 22nd August 2025, a Parliamentary panel recommended expediting the inclusion of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine in the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) across all states and Union Territories to reduce cervical cancer incidence and improve women's health outcomes. In its report, the Committee on Petitions, Rajya Sabha, headed by Narain Dass Gupta, observed that cervical cancer remained the most common cancer among Indian women and the HPV vaccine had proven effective in preventing it.

The panel noted that while the Union Budget 2024 prioritised the phased introduction of the vaccine, its rollout had so far begun only in Sikkim and Bihar, with no integration into the national immunisation schedule. It therefore strongly urged nationwide implementation of the vaccine for girls aged 9–14 years, as recommended by the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation.

In view of low cancer screening rates, the Committee advised scaling up the national screening programme, expanding infrastructure, and tailoring awareness campaigns to local contexts. It stressed involving NGOs and celebrity cancer survivors to combat stigma and promote early screening. Additionally, the panel called for upskilling healthcare providers, enhancing nurse and technician training, strengthening radiotherapy facilities, and prioritising domestic manufacturing of PET scan equipment to make cancer care more affordable.



Indian Medical Association raises an alarm on the misuse of new weight-loss drugs

On 23rd August 2025, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) sounded an alarm over the potential misuse and mis-prescription of weight-loss drugs such as Wegovy and Mounjaro. IMA national president Dilip Bhanushali said these GLP-1 medications should have been prescribed only by certified endocrinologists or diabetologists, as their long-term complications remained unknown. The association announced that it would formally write to the health ministry and drug regulator, urging stricter prescription controls.

The concerns arose amid reports of rampant misuse, with cosmetologists, physiotherapists, ayurveda, homeopathy, and other non-modern medicine practitioners prescribing the drugs for cosmetic weight loss. Dermatologist Dr. Geoffrey Vaz highlighted that even online pharmacies were selling Mounjaro with little prescription verification. While any registered medical practitioner could legally prescribe the drugs, the absence of clear restrictions fueled fears of unsafe use.

The IMA had also recently advised caution against over-the-counter “miracle” anti-aging pills without medical guidance. Doctors warned that in India, the true side effects of these new weight-loss drugs would become evident only after wider use, especially once cheaper generics entered the market in 2026. Analysts estimated that users could rise from 100,000 currently to four million by 2029–30, driven by falling prices and growing demand.

Indian hospitals target surge in foreign medical tourists

On 24th August 2025, India's healthcare providers competed for a greater share of overseas patients as foreign tourist arrivals for medical treatment surged to nearly 650,000 in 2024, compared to just over 180,000 in 2020. In the first four months of 2025 alone, the figure stood at 131,856, according to tourism ministry data. Hospitals reported that beyond South Asia, Africa, and West Asia, enquiries increasingly came from Europe and the UK, where strained public health systems pushed patients abroad.

Leading chains such as Max Healthcare, Apollo Hospitals, Fortis, and Aster DM Healthcare positioned themselves as global solutions providers, many of them aiming to double overseas revenue by next year. Max Healthcare chairman Abhay Soi said India offered a unique advantage due to significantly lower costs, high surgical volumes, and shorter wait times than in countries like the UK.

Industry executives highlighted India's credibility, cost arbitrage, and abundant workforce as key drivers. Apollo Hospitals targeted raising international revenue from 5% to 10% through new markets in Southeast Asia. Aster DM Healthcare also explored opportunities beyond its regional strongholds, while Fortis Healthcare expected overseas revenue to rise in absolute terms. Experts noted that India's young healthcare workforce strengthened its role as a global medical hub.



Andhra Pradesh launches BRAIN programme to boost affordable medical innovation

On 25th August 2025, the Andhra Pradesh government, in collaboration with the APAC Biodesign Alliance and Stanford Biodesign, launched the Bharat Biodesign Research and Innovation (BRAIN) programme in Amaravati. The initiative was aimed at developing affordable medical technologies, fostering workforce training, and advancing AI-enabled healthcare solutions. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu inaugurated the programme at the Ratan Tata Innovation Hub (RTIH) after meeting leaders from the APAC Biodesign Alliance.

Mr. Naidu stated that BRAIN would bring global health innovation to Andhra Pradesh while creating scalable local solutions for India and other emerging markets. He described it as a step towards improving healthcare access, affordability, and quality for every citizen. Discussions during the launch focused on healthcare innovation, medical technology, and building entrepreneurial capacity to position the state as a hub for next-generation healthcare solutions.

The programme was designed to align scalable medical technologies with local needs, train young innovators in global bio-design practices, foster startup ecosystem development, and create employment opportunities. Operated from the RTIH in Amaravati, it was led by the AI & MedTech Alliance Foundation in partnership with APAC Biodesign Alliance and Stanford Biodesign. Officials said BRAIN aimed to serve as a model for health innovation across India.





National Institute of Ayurveda (NIA) hosts Continuing Medical Education (CME) on Ayurveda-based dietary practices

The National Institute of Ayurveda (NIA), Jaipur, hosted a first-of-its-kind national-level Continuing Medical Education (CME) programme on “Ayurveda Aahar” from 25th to 30th August 2025. The six-day event explored traditional Ayurvedic dietary principles through a scientific perspective and examined their relevance in modern healthcare.

Organised by the Department of Rasa Shastra & Bhaishajya Kalpana and the Department of Swasthavritta & Yoga, the CME was titled “Exploring Ayurveda Aahara: Scientific Insights into Traditional Dietary Practices.” It focused on nutritional benefits, therapeutic uses, and the integration of Ayurvedic dietary practices into contemporary medical systems.

The sessions covered themes such as classical Ayurvedic knowledge and modern analysis, the role of Pathya Kalpana in health promotion and disease prevention, scientific evaluation of Ayurvedic food products, safety standards, nutritional profiling, product design and packaging, as well as global commercialisation opportunities for Ayurveda-based foods.

A dedicated exhibition showcased dietary products developed by NIA's departments, offering insights for researchers, academicians, and industry experts. Prof. Anupam Srivastava, Head of Rasa Shastra & Bhaishajya Kalpana, said the initiative represented a step toward translating Ayurvedic wisdom into evidence-based nutritional solutions. More than 30 experts, including representatives from FSSAI, CFTRI, and the Ministry of AYUSH, participated.

Lancet study calls for regulation amid rising c-section deliveries in India

On 26th August 2025, researchers reported a steep rise in caesarean deliveries in India, from 8.5 per cent in 2005 to 21.5 per cent in 2021, which was significantly above the World Health Organization's recommended levels. The findings, published in The Lancet Regional Health Southeast Asia, called for policy measures, including stronger regulation in private healthcare.

The analysis stated that while medically indicated C-sections were critical for preventing maternal and newborn deaths, rates exceeding 10 per cent were not linked to reduced mortality. Unjustified C-sections, however, were associated with longer hospital stays, higher healthcare costs, and increased risks of asthma, obesity, type 1 diabetes, and allergies in children.

The team, which reviewed 75 studies from India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, highlighted that avoidable C-sections added financial stress to families. Out-of-pocket costs in India averaged Rs 43,000 in private hospitals compared to Rs 8,500 in public facilities. Limited regulation, inadequate insurance coverage, financial incentives for providers, medico-legal concerns, and scheduling convenience contributed to the rise.

Researchers also noted socio-economic factors, maternal age, education, and family preferences as drivers. With nearly one in five births involving a C-section, the authors urged coordinated policy reforms, including payment changes, regulatory oversight, and better antenatal counselling.



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