

FROM THE ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S DESK

I AM pleased to report the new activities and achievements of the Indian Council of Medical Research for the year 2007-08. In October 2007, the government of India (GOI) announced the setting up of a new Department of Health Research (DHR, *Swasthya Anusandhan Vibhag*), in the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MOH&FW) that is a recognition of the GOI of the importance of medical research in the country. The DHR will have several responsibilities relating to both the conduct and co-ordinating health and medical research in India besides overseeing the activities of the ICMR. This decision also gives the ICMR a new recognition, importance and responsibility in discharging its duties and rededicating itself in the service of the nation.



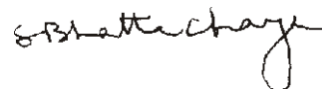
There have been some important studies from which early results were forthcoming such as the results of both the HIV vaccine Phase I trials done at Pune and Chennai. The trial with the MVA-based AIDS vaccine candidate (TBC-M4) done at Tuberculosis Research Centre (TRC), Chennai showed that the vaccine candidate had acceptable levels of safety and well tolerated. A prime boost with this vaccine candidate and DNA vaccine to assess whether it is possible to improve the magnitude and breadth of the responses is underway.

A HIV-TB Task Force to study the efficacy of short course intermittent regimens in the management of HIV-1 seropositive pulmonary tuberculosis is underway at Chennai and Pune. The subjects were treated as per the RNTCP regimens to estimate the cure and relapse rates for TB in HIV seropositive individuals. Data from both the centres showed that the response to anti-TB treatment is satisfactory among HIV patients. Also, there was no difference between patients treated for six months and 9 months. Drug resistance pattern in this population was found to be similar to that seen in the HIV-uninfected TB patients. However, death rates were high among the HIV infected group as compared to the HIV uninfected.

Data generated from the large scale community trial with repeated annual rounds of co-administration of Albendazole and DEC coordinated by Vector Control Research Centre at Puducherry showed that this strategy is operationally feasible, safe for community use and has an edge over DEC alone in terms of reducing new infections of lymphatic filariasis. This would have important policy implications towards achieving the national goal by elimination of the disease by 2015. Council's several Institutes and Centres investigated various outbreaks of Chikungunya, dengue, Japanese encephalitis, leptospirosis, avian influenza and other conditions in various parts of the country. Two hundred and fifty influenza virus strains were isolated by the Influenza Surveillance Network. During the year, the HIV drug resistance laboratory at NARI, Pune was accredited by World Health Organization (WHO) and the National Institute of Virology, Pune designated as the WHO H5 Reference Laboratory for South East Asia Region.

The impact factor of Indian Journal of Medical Research (IJMR) increased from 1.224 in year 2006 to 1.670 in 2007, which is the highest ever for an Indian journal. The Council's scientists published 415 research papers in various prestigious scientific journals and 7 patents were filed with the Indian patent Office. A total of 1044 research projects and 534 research fellowships were funded by the Council during 2007 - 2008.

I am indebted to the Hon'ble Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Dr A. Ramadoss, Ms Panabaka Lakshmi, Hon'ble Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare, the Secretary, DHR, Mr. Naresh Dayal and other officials of the MOH&FW for all support and encouragement. I would also like to place on record the help and co-operation of my colleagues in the ICMR.



(Dr S. K. Bhattacharya)

Additional Director-General