

Overview on ICMR

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) set up as the Indian Research Fund Association in 1911, has evolved over the years in line with changing health research needs, effectively addressing the new challenges that have emerged. Today, it is the premier national agency for the formulation, promotion and conduct of biomedical research in India. The current strategy has close interaction with health systems, including disease control programmes, which is supported by the continued exploitation of scientific and technological advances from basic to applied research, from biomedical to health sciences and from laboratory to field research.

The Council has consolidated and intensified its research on important communicable and non-communicable diseases, reproductive health and nutrition, traditional medicine and upcoming fields of bioinformatics and communication. The research priorities of the Council are in line with the national health policy and priorities. It works very closely with the national programmes which have well defined targets for control, elimination and eradication of various diseases.

ICMR has adopted a twin track approach to meet its objectives; intramural (through Institutes totally funded by ICMR) and extramural research (through grants-in-aid given to projects in non-ICMR Institutions). The permanent Institutes are mission-oriented laboratories located in different parts of India (**Fig 1**). They address research on specific health topics of relevance to the country, such as tuberculosis, leprosy, cholera/diarrhoeal diseases, viral diseases, AIDS, malaria, kala-azar, vector control, nutrition, food and drug toxicology, reproductive health, immunohaematology, oncology, epidemiology, bio-statistics, occupational health etc. The Regional Medical Research Centres (RMRCs) focus especially on regional health problems and also aim to strengthen and generate research capabilities in different geographic and less well served areas of the country. Extramural research is promoted by ICMR basically to strengthen the biomedical expertise outside the Council, especially in Medical Colleges and the University systems. This is a very important contribution of the Council in developing and fostering a culture of research in academia which is achieved through grants-in-aid given to researchers in non-ICMR Institutes/Medical Colleges/Universities etc., and by setting up of Centres of Advanced Research and Task Force Studies.

ICMR's Human Resource Development (HRD) plan is focused on formulating policies, procedures and partnerships to ensure the scientific competitiveness of ICMR. Skilled and talented people are undoubtedly the most important resources for the delivery of high quality science and its translation for the public's health. That is why training and career development are central to ICMR's mission. ICMR is an equal opportunity employer and practices affirmative

action. Human resource development in biomedical research is encouraged by ICMR through various schemes such as Research fellowships, Short-Term Research Studentship (STS) and various training programmes and workshops conducted by ICMR Institutes and Headquarters. An International Fellowship Programme, recently initiated by ICMR is an excellent platform for capacity building in the state of the art technologies for Indian research scientists. ICMR also offers research training to scientists belonging to developing countries in various Indian Institutes/ laboratories of excellence. The Council offers the position of Emeritus Scientist to retired medical scientists and teachers. The Council awards prizes to Indian scientists (young as well as established ones), in recognition of their significant contributions made in various fields of biomedical research.

ICMR is an important component of research system in the country and the need of the hour is to scale up and strengthen the public health infrastructure. In the era of globalization, international collaborations can be an effective measure for the better understanding and development of new scientific technologies, innovation, capability and technology transfer. ICMR has been taking proactive role in developing these collaborations in the emerging areas of drug and vaccine development, genomics, disease surveillance and molecular epidemiology. Several national and bilateral agreements between India and other Institutes/Countries have been signed in the areas of mutual interest.

The Mission of ICMR is to promote better health in India through research. It provides stewardship, conducts and supports health research, generates knowledge and ensures its utilization. Moreover, ICMR develops resources for health research in areas of national public health importance. ICMR is working towards the strengthening and streamlining of the needs and efforts of biomedical community.

In September 2007, a new Department of Health Research (DHR) was set up with the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India in order to build upon & effectively utilize the research capacity and capabilities to engage in effective health systems research, conduct research into social determinants of health and develop technologies and products that would respond to national health priorities. ICMR is one of the ten allocations of business of DHR.



Launch of Department of Health Research (DHR),
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India
New Delhi, October 5, 2007



ICMR Annual Day Oration by
Dr. Elias A Zerhouni, Director, National Institutes of Health, USA
New Delhi, October 5, 2007

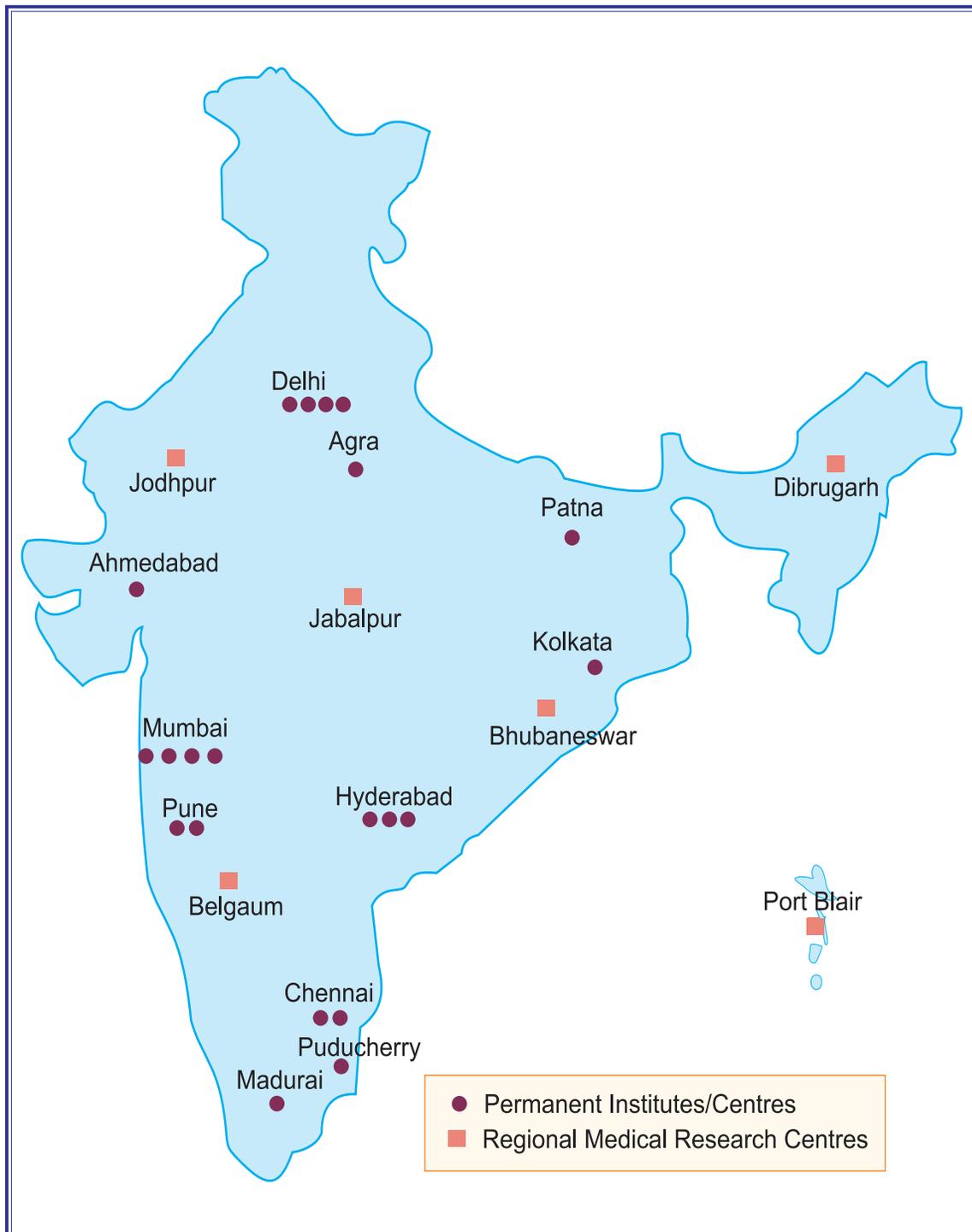


Fig. 1. ICMR Institutional Network