

Indian Council of Medical Research
Division of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases

CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR RESEARCH ON VIRAL HEPATITIS IN INDIA

BACKGROUND:

Viral hepatitis is increasingly being recognized as a public health problem, having epidemic proportions that cause 1.34 million deaths each year. In India, the estimated burden of hepatitis is very high, necessitating focus on prevention and control measures of hepatitis to mitigate the morbidity and mortality due to hepatitis. Amongst the reported causes of mortality amongst communicable diseases in India in 2015, viral hepatitis accounted for 3% of total. There is however, a paucity of nationally representative data to establish accurate disease burden. New infections caused by the five known hepatitis viruses – A, B, C, D and E (HAV, HBV, HCV, HDV and HEV) – can be prevented. In addition, testing and treatment can improve the health of persons with chronic infections. The sequel to chronic hepatitis includes cirrhosis and hepato-cellular carcinoma that pose long term burden on the health system.

India is committed to achieve the SDGs and the SDG 3.1 aims to achieve the elimination of viral hepatitis by 2030. The Government of India is a signatory to this WHA resolution and the country's vision is to move towards elimination of Viral Hepatitis by 2030. With this background, a comprehensive integrated 3 year National Action Plan for Viral Hepatitis (NAP-VH) is being developed by MoH&FW, Govt. of India, with the key objective to provide an actionable framework of evidence based, priority interventions to support the national response for prevention, control and management of viral hepatitis in the country.

In view of the above and existing gaps in current programmes, it is pertinent to address all aspects under the Integrated National Programme on Prevention and Control Programme for Viral hepatitis, of which research and innovation is one important component. It is proposed to enhance knowledge and skills required for evidence base on various aspects of the epidemic, up-scaled operational research, cross-cutting, multi-disciplinary themes, improved research quality, better research capabilities and expanded partnerships, utilization and management of research based knowledge on viral hepatitis, relevant measurable and context specific indicators for tracking the epidemic and assessing impact. The program will focus more on operational programmatic research that could feed into planning and policy decision.

DESCRIPTION:

This announcement aims at seeking the full-fledged proposals for research on Viral Hepatitis in India covering the following possible areas of research, to be funded by the Govt. of India. Financial support will be for a maximum of 2 years.

PRIORITY AREAS OF RESEARCH:

➤ **Lab Monitoring / Strengthening for Real Time Data Inflow and Feedback**

- Automated report generation using modern technology.

➤ **Rapid or Molecular Technology Utilization**

- Capacity building and hands-on training of laboratory staff at various levels to perform molecular assays.
- Use of molecular technology in understanding the distribution/ clustering of strains/circulating genotypes / serotypes.

➤ **Operational Research**

- Diseases burden studies (epidemiology, transmission dynamics and risk factors) for viral hepatitis with special focus on HEV.
- To understand viral / host components leading to severity during pregnancy for Hepatitis E.
- Identify barriers for low immunization coverage for Hep B in India.
- Studies to understand the impact of immunization of Hep B over years.
- Develop point-of-care diagnostics (for bedside use) with good sensitivity and specificity.
- Multi-centric screening of blood and stool samples from organ transplant patients to know HEV chronicity.
- Field testing / clinical trials of new interventions (drugs / vaccines).
- To analyse HBV vaccine response in HIV infected individuals.
- Comparison of indigenous and Chinese HEV vaccines in clinical trials.
- Understanding efficacy of alternative medicine in preventing/treating viral hepatitis.
- Assessment of utility and cost effectiveness studies of NAT with routine ELISA in blood banks in HBV, HCV and HIV among blood donors.
- Estimating the cost-effectiveness of RUP syringes.
- Understanding modes of transmission of viral hepatitis B in local settings.

Prevention

- To assess re-infection rates in Hep B and Hep C.
- To assess SVR in re-infection rates.
- To develop interventions to prevent re-infections.
- Develop monitoring systems for adherence to DAAs.
- Studies to identify effective approaches for partner testing.
- To identify effective approaches for adherence to treatment in different risk groups.
- To assess incidence of Hepatitis A among men having sex with men.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING PROPOSALS:

Proposals to be submitted by the Indian investigators should be duly forwarded by the Head of the Institute. Research proposals must be in the ICMR format for adhoc research projects available at www.icmr.nic.in and www.icmrextramural.in and should provide the following details:

- Detailed Research plan including a description of the project, monitoring plans if required, and expected outcomes.
- Research proposal should describe the research methodology in detail, the abstract, references, detailed study design alongwith budget and justification of each of the budget items.
- Abstract of the project that describes the research, need, and significance of the proposed study.
- Detailed proposals should be submitted as per the “Full Proposal Submission Format” guidelines available at (www.icmrextramural.in).

The application should be accompanied by letter from the Investigator describing his/her activities and specific role in the project and his/her brief biodata alongwith **10 hard copies of the project proposal duly signed by the PIs and forwarded through the Head of the Institution.**

BUDGET:

Research proposal Budget must include details for Staff / Manpower, Equipment / instruments with names (non-recurring), Supplies (recurring), and other Services along with proper justification for each of them.

REVIEW:

All applications will undergo peer review. Projects must receive a high assessment score to be funded. At the time of the review, some applicants may also need to provide additional information or clarifications, if requested by reviewers.

Applications will be reviewed according to the following criteria:

- Scientific merit and quality.
- Feasibility of the proposal.
- Relevance to the scope and intent of the Research Program.
- Significance of research of feed into planning and policy decision.
- Likelihood that the proposed project will achieve its proposed goal(s).
- Benefits of the project for the users and the research field.
- Benefits for society at large.
- Capacities in place for implementing research findings in practice.
- Applicant’s past scientific record, as described in the Biosketch.
- Appropriateness of the total budget.

Final decision of review will be taken by the ICMR and successful applicants will be notified by the ICMR, following that review. Awardees will be required to submit yearly annual report for continuation of the project and a copy of the final report along with the two-page summary report of the outcomes of the proposal to the ICMR within 45 days after completion of the project.

HOW TO APPLY

The applicants should submit their application through the ICMR electronic project management system (ePPMS) <http://icmrextramural.in/ICMR/>.

Interested researchers should avail the “Online Submission of Extramural Research Projects” facility available at the ICMR website (<http://www.icmr.nic.in/>). They would need to register themselves with the online submission system. Complete guidelines for the same have been provided in the website (www.icmrextramural.in); The same should strictly be followed. PIs already registered need not register again.

Detailed proposals should be submitted as per the “Full Proposal Submission Format” guidelines available at (www.icmrextramural.in). In case of any queries related to online submission, please contact ICMR online team at Ph: 011-26588590, Email: onlinextramural@gmail.com, onlineicmrteam@gmail.com.

Investigators should select Broad Area as “Epidemiology & Communicable Diseases” and Major Discipline as “Viral Hepatitis” for submission of Proposals.

The Investigator should select Dr. Harpreet Kaur as Programme Officer.

TIME LINE:

Full Proposal Submission Deadline / End Date: **15th January, 2018**

CONTACT PERSON:

Dr. Harpreet Kaur, Scientist ‘E’ (Email: vhr.icmr@gmail.com and Ph: 011-26588237), Division of ECD (Room No. 413, Porta Cabin, 3rd Floor), Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR Hqrs.), P.O. Box No. 4911, Ansari Nagar, New Delhi – 110 029, India.