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North India states have more H1N1 cases than in 2018

January 28, 2019/DNA

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January 28, 2019/The News Minute

Pictures of New Delhi smog tell only part of the story of India’s air pollution crisis

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The latest IDSP (Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme), a report by the Health Ministry has revealed that the number of swine flu cases in the first three weeks of 2019 in some North Indian states has already crossed the total number of cases reported in those states in 2018. The alarming spike has led to the Delhi government issuing an advisory on Dos and Don'ts and on the prevention of swine flu. The report revealed that there have been 265 cases of H1N1 in the National Capital until January 20, whereas the city reported only 205 cases until December 2018. The same is true for Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan, where several deaths and an even higher number of cases than last year have been reported. The latest IDSP (Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme), a report by the Health Ministry has revealed that the number of swine flu cases in the first three weeks of 2019 in some North Indian states has already crossed the total number of cases reported in those states in 2018. The alarming spike has led to the Delhi government issuing an advisory on Dos and Don'ts and on the prevention of swine flu. The report revealed that there have been 265 cases of H1N1 in the National Capital until January 20, whereas the city reported only 205 cases until December 2018. The same is true for Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan, where several deaths and an even higher number of cases than last year have been reported. Dr Soumya Swaminathan, Former Director General, **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**, had earlier confirmed that the H1N1 swine flu virus has mutated and the disease is not seasonal anymore. The new strain, called Michigan, was discovered in India early in 2018. The California strain of the disease has existed since 2009. Initially recorded in 2009 in Mexico, the disease was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization in 2010. India had already witnessed 42,592 cases and 3,000 deaths by the end of 2010, as recorded.

Mangaluru doctors are raising awareness on cancer through a 'Yakshagana' play

January 28, 2019/The News Minute

Come World Cancer Day on February 4, an orthopaedic surgeon, an obstetrician, a gynecologist, a physician, and an oncologist, will all join hands to raise awareness about cancer. The group has decided to take a different approach though – furthering the cause through 'Yakshagana', a traditional art form in coastal Karnataka that combines theatrical elements of dance, music, dialogue, costume and make-up. Through Yakshagana, the team of doctors feel that audiences in coastal districts will find the message more effective. The play, 'Arbudasura Garvabhanga', is backed by the Mangaluru Chapter of Indian Medical Association (IMA), Indian Red Cross and Association of Medical Consultants Association. The group is being led by Dr B Sachidanand Rai, senior orthopaedic surgeon and president of IMA Mangaluru chapter, who says that the first of its kind play may strike a better chord with the locals. Dr Rai explains that cancer is of different kinds, and unlike several illnesses which can be cured by simple medication, cancer cannot be, unless detected early. "There is no medication to simply heal it, it

can be controlled. One can effectively take initiative by facilitating early detection and intervention by consulting the medical practitioners. Our play hopes to make people more aware; and given the importance that Yakshagana has in the coastal residents, we find it to be a better medium to communicate our message,” he says.

The songs in the play have been written by Yakshagana litterateur Nithyananda Karantha Polali; and the ‘thalamaddale’ will be performed by professional artists.

The doctors, who seem quite excited about the play, say that it was a tough task to coordinate with the veteran medical practitioners who put in extra effort for practice while, in the midst of attending to their patients. The play comes at a time when the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** cancer registry data report has highlighted rising incidence of cancer cases in the country with 15.8 lakh cancer cases reported in India in 2018 and over 8 lakh people losing their lives to the disease the same year.

[Pictures of New Delhi smog tell only part of the story of India’s air pollution crisis](#)

January 28, 2019/Los Angeles Times

This winter, as in every winter during the last several years, large parts of northern India have been enveloped in a haze of smog.

In November, after the annual Hindu festival Diwali, during which burning firecrackers is a custom, the air quality index in New Delhi, the capital, soared to 980 — nearly 20 times worse than what the World Health Organization considers safe for humans. This was a marginal improvement from the year before, when pollution levels had breached 1,000.

A study released in January 2018 by the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay and the U.S.-based Health Effects Institute found that 75% of pollution deaths occur in rural areas. And in 2017, about 1.24 million deaths in India were attributed to pollution. The statistics and photos of cities blanketed in brown air periodically spur the government of India, with a population of 1.3 billion, into action. Environmental courts pass missives such as banning construction work and penalizing polluters. Residents react, too, with those who can afford to do so rushing to purchase air purifiers that cost upward of \$150.

India is one of the world’s fastest-growing economies, but the rapid pace of development has come at a huge health cost. The impact of unchecked construction, weak regulation of industrial pollution and the burning of crop stubble by farmers have given India the dubious distinction of being home to 14 of the world’s 15 most polluted cities, according to the World Health Organization.

India’s failure to curb the problem stands in contrast to neighboring China, which once had the world’s worst air in its cities, but in recent years has taken steps such as reducing highly polluting coal-based power plants.

Many rural Indian residents, particularly in the north, burn wood, coal or cow dung for cooking, often in poorly ventilated spaces inside homes. This exposes entire households to dangerous levels of particulate matter and pollutants such as carbon

monoxide. In December, a report by the government-run **Indian Council for Medical Research** blamed indoor air for 480,000 of India's 1.24 million total deaths from pollution in 2017. The scale of the problem is evident as soon as one drives out of New Delhi into neighboring Haryana, a largely agricultural state. Fifty miles from the Indian capital, in the village of Gehlab, three women toiled over mud stoves one recent morning in a household where 15 members of one extended family live. Their faces hidden behind veils for modesty, the women churned out hot savory breads known as rotis, alternating coal pieces and small sticks to keep the fire going. They were unmoved by the thick plumes of smoke that hung above the stoves. "I feel a sting in my eyes often and sometimes cough but it's not an issue," said Sudesh Rani, 31, who cooks for her family of six twice a day.

[Rajasthan Zika strain is endemic to Asia, says new study](#)

January 29, 2019/The Hindu

The Zika virus that infected 159 people in an outbreak in Rajasthan last year, could have been circulating in India for several years and is endemic to Asia, according to a new study published in the journal *Infection, Genetics and Evolution* this week. The study, led by authors from Pune's National Institute of Virology (NIV), an institute under the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**, is the first to sequence full Zika virus genomes from India.

Confers herd immunity

"The finding that the outbreak was caused by an endemic virus is quite important," said Nathan Grubaugh, an epidemiologist from the Yale School of Public Health, who was not involved in the study. "It suggests that people in the region may have been previously exposed to the virus, building herd immunity that may limit future outbreaks." During the latter half of 2018, India recorded its first major Zika outbreaks in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Around then, the ICMR said the Rajasthan virus had been sequenced and was closely related to a virus that had caused large epidemics and birth defects in Latin America in 2015.

Crucial contradictions

This week's publication contradicts the the ICMR's previous statements in two ways. First, it indicates that the Rajasthan Zika strain is not closely related to the Brazilian one. "It appears that the Indian strain has been around for a while...The Brazilian strain diverged more recently," said Farah Ishtiaq, who studies the effects of infectious diseases on ecology at Bengaluru's Indian Institute of Science.

Prof. Grubaugh adds that the phylogenetic analysis in the paper, along with previous research, suggests that the virus has been in Asia for "at least 50 years".

"Based on limited data, I suspect it is [endemic to India]," he added. While this is good news, because it implies that a portion of the population could be immune, it could also mean that Zika-related birth defects such as microcephaly were occurring even before the virus was first detected in India.

[Cancer Cure Can Be a Reality by the End of This Year! MAJOR Medical Breakthrough Offers Hope to Patients Everywhere](#)



January 29, 2019/Latest LY

Looks like cancer cure could soon become a reality in the coming years. Israeli scientists are in the process of developing a drug named MuTaTo, which could offer the promise of a cure. A team in Israel reportedly claims that an antidote will help and start to work almost immediately and in just a few weeks will be able to destroy the cancerous cells. Researchers are working towards something that can help destroy cancer cells and if it works out, it could offer hope to those involved in a long-drawn battle with cancer. The experts working on the drug claim that MuTaTo will not have any side-effects and will be extremely effective in destroying cancerous cells. Can Haldi Cure Cancer? Indian-American Researchers Unleash Power of Turmeric. Cancer is a significant burden on the human race. With over 100 types of cancers, the disease is one of the biggest killers worldwide. Most are caused in the liver, lung, stomach, and bowel. As per reports by Cancer Research UK, 2018 saw over 9.6 million deaths due to cancer worldwide. In India, according to the National Cancer Registry Programme of the **India Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**, Over 1300 Indians die every day due to cancer. There was an increase in the mortality rate due to cancer of about 6 percent between 2012 and 2014. 478,180 deaths out of 2,934,314 cases reported only in the year 2012.

[Vikram Hospital launches 'Home Care Service for Cancer Patients'](#)

January 30, 2019/Bio Spectrum India

Vikram Hospital (Bengaluru) has announced the launch of its best-in-class 'Home Care Service' for cancer patients to tackle the increasing cases of cancer in Bengaluru. The service will be available only in Bengaluru for now and will expand to other cities of Karnataka depending upon the demand. Latest figures available with Population Based Cancer Registry of **Indian Council of Medical Research** states that, Bengaluru has the highest number of cases of Cancer in India with 113 males and 139 female cancer patients per 100,000 population. Dr. Somesh Mittal, Managing Director & CEO, Vikram Hospital (Bengaluru) said, "We strive for excellence in best possible service to patients with the highest regards to quality, patient safety and patient satisfaction. Our 'Home Care Service' in Oncology will include treatment of cancer patients including advanced cancers, basic intravenous drugs, safer chemotherapy, pain and palliative care, post chemotherapy care, post radiotherapy and postoperative care. Our team comprising primary care doctor, nurse and attendants will be equipped with basic medical equipment like bedside monitors, ECG machine Blood Pressure instruments, Pulse oximetry, IV Stands, Home Oxygen Concentrators, etc. at all the time and their charges will be based only on usage." Commenting on the demand for Home Care Service Dr. Somesh Mittal further added, "The demand for Oncology home care is huge as there is a large subset of patients on home palliative care who need pain management, supportive care and medical review from time to time, but cannot travel to hospital as arranging ambulance, etc. takes a lot of time and resources. However, patients prefer to be connected to the primary treating team always because of trust, empathy and compassion and hence we have included Home Care Service in Oncology."

Good and Bad News about India's Zika Virus Outbreak

January 31, 2019/The Swaddle



Last year's Zika virus outbreak in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh was caused by a pathogen unique to India, with little link to the virus behind 2015's epidemic in Latin America, reports The Hindu, lowering the risk of a wide-scale epidemic.

Scientists from the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune, an arm of the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**, led the sequencing of the Indian Zika virus genome, concluding that it has been present in India for years, possibly decades. "The finding that the outbreak was caused by an endemic virus is quite important," Nathan Grubaugh, an epidemiologist from the Yale School of Public Health not involved in the NIV study, commented to The Hindu. "It suggests that people in the region may have been previously exposed to the virus, building herd immunity that may limit future outbreaks." At the same time, the new study refuted previous positive announcements by ICMR and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (and reported by The Swaddle at the time) that India's Zika virus lacks the genetic mutation that causes microcephaly, a birth defect characterized by an unusually small, underdeveloped head that ravaged newborns in Brazil during the 2015 outbreak. Instead, NIV's study says there's not enough proof to conclude India's Zika virus does not cause birth defects in infected pregnant women: "A word of caution should be maintained on the claims of these mutations on the development of microcephaly in humans, given no direct clinical evidence of their effect." It's possible, the experts say, that Indian Zika-linked birth defects, including microcephaly, have been occurring unbeknownst all along, even before the 2018 outbreak in two states.

Chhattisgarh village grapples with Kidney-related ailments, toll reaches 70

January 31, 2019/The Times of India

With yet another death due to renal failure reported in Supebeda village in Chhattisgarh, the death toll in the region reached 70 on Thursday. The deceased was identified as 43-year-old Bhavani Sinha who had been sick for the past 16 months, and died due to prolonged illness. The village is known for deaths due to kidney failure. As per block medical officer (BMO) Sunil Bharti, Bhavani Sinha was undergoing treatment in Nawarangpur District Hospital in Odisha. The disease weakened his heart and he died of cardiac arrest in the hospital during treatment. He had been in the hospital since January 7. The BMO recorded the statements of the family of the deceased. According to Bhavani's medical report, his urea level was at 217 points — five times the normal level, while his creatine was at 6.2 — which affected his heart. Talking to TOI, Trilochan Sonwani, a villager, who has lost 10 relatives due to kidney ailments, said that the increasing toll has triggered panic in the village once again. BMO Bharti said, "A dialysis centre has been developed in Devbhog, 18km from Supebeda and the natives have submitted in written that they are sceptical about undergoing dialysis and prefer to resolve their kidney ailments through other medication." As per the block medical official, out of the total population of 1,200 in the village, 256 people were tested positive for kidney-related ailments. Since the outbreak of the diseases, several research teams including **Indian Council Of Medical Research (ICMR)** from Delhi and from others metro cities have visited the place to collect blood samples.

With regards,

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