

5. ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR HEALTH RESEARCH

The period leading to the 11th Plan has seen new initiatives that are changing the national and international health research milieu.

For examples:

- a) India's commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which has placed health at the forefront of human development.
- b) Releasing of the Report of India's National Commission of Macroeconomics and Health, which has provided a road map for improving access to a minimum set of essential health interventions to all.
- c) Launching of the National Rural Health Mission which outlines a plan of action to improve the availability of and access to quality health care by people, especially for those residing in rural areas, the poor, women and children.
- d) Completion of the Performance Appraisal of the ICMR which provides a blueprint of steps the ICMR should initiate to be able to take advantage of the unprecedented developments.
- e) Enhanced activity for development of drugs for diseases especially the neglected ones. For example setting up of the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative at Geneva of which ICMR is one of the funding members.
- f) Globally funds available for health research have increased to US\$ 610b in 2004 from about US\$30.0b in 1994.
- g) Philanthropic and private contributions for health research are increasing (for example Buffett's gift worth about \$37b has doubled the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's endowment from \$ 29b to nearly \$60b, increasing the Foundation's annual giving from \$1.4b to \$3.0b.
- h) Concern expressed by the SAC-PM for scientific R&D in the country especially its meager funding and failure to attract young blood.

With its network of permanent Institutes and field stations coupled with its convening and coordination abilities, ICMR is in a position to address the needs identified and opportunities provided by these developments. The ICMR would streamline its strategies to better leverage the strengths and its reach to take advantage of emerging opportunities.

The ICMR strives for excellence in all its scientific endeavours, while responding to the Government's needs and forging valuable partnerships with other health research and science and technology agencies. In ethics and research governance the ICMR aims for the highest possible standards and promotes best practices.

During the 11th Plan period the ICMR would

- support and conduct high quality research relating to human health;
- provide leadership in health research especially its governance to strict adherence to ethical principles and regulatory processes;
- attract, train and retain scientists with outstanding research credentials/potentials to meet country's health research needs;
- invest in scientists and their careers, developing new research skills; address areas of skill-gaps;
- promote health research in medical colleges, universities, and research institutes;
- invest in research infrastructure to create state-of-the-art laboratories;
- promote translation of research into practice and
- develop and strengthen partnerships. ◆