



India takes its first step towards opening door to CHIS

News:

- New research model, which involves intentionally exposing healthy volunteers to pathogens in a controlled environment, promises to be efficient and cost-effective, says [ICMR](#).

Context:

- India has taken its first step to introduce Controlled Human Infection Studies (CHIS), used in many countries for vaccine and treatment development.

Vision:

- “This paper is aimed at addressing a variety of ethical issues so that research can be conducted in India without compromising on ethical principles while ensuring the protection of human participants,” notes ICMR.

Organisational structure:

- Riddled with ethical issues, CHIS has still now been a no-go area for India, but [Indian Council of Medical Research's \(ICMR\)](#) Bioethics Unit is set to change this.
- Outside of India, this relatively new research model which involves intentionally exposing healthy volunteers to pathogens in a controlled Environment, has been used to study malaria, typhoid, dengue, etc.



- ICMR's Bioethics Unit has introduced a consensus policy statement which is now open for comment and argues the case for bringing in CHIS.
- The document talks of the need, benefits, and challenges associated with CHIS.
- ICMR notes that India has so far stayed away from CHIS, because regardless of the potential scientific benefits, these studies are ethically sensitive and raise concerns about contentious research ethics — issues like deliberate harm, possible disproportionate payment and hence inducements, third-party risk, withdrawal from the study and research with vulnerable participants.
- In shorts, “ICMR Bioethics Unit has formulated a consensus policy statement to address the ethical concerns related to the conduct of CHIS and this has been developed through a process of rigorous engagement with experts in the last few months.
- These studies may play a crucial role in advancing the scientific understanding of infectious diseases and thereby accelerating the development of treatment strategies.
- However, being a very specialised type of research involving deliberately infecting healthy volunteers with a specific pathogen under controlled conditions, these may have a lot of ethical challenges and an attempt has been made to address these issues in this document.
- The document is being posted on ICMR website for public consultation till August 16,” noted ICMR.