

South and Southeast Asian countries unite to strengthen health research systems through collaboration

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To ensure that health research could provide direct guidance to policy making



The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Department of Health Research (DHR) invited representatives from Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and India for a high-level regional dialogue to strengthen the health research system at Sushma Swaraj Bhawan in New Delhi, India.

This meeting proved to be an important milestone towards promoting cooperation in South and Southeast Asia in order to ensure that health research could provide direct guidance to policy making, take into account regional priorities and create a sustainable system for the future.

ICMR offered to share its tools and resources, including Common Ethics Review Forms and free online training courses, so that countries in the early stages of building research systems can adapt them rather than start from scratch. In view of the future, the countries agreed to establish systematic mechanisms for sharing, including annual/biennial meetings, visits to each other, and joint capacity building programmes in research methods, ethics, grant writing and science communication.

South-South Cooperation: Countries agreed that regional cooperation is essential to address common challenges such as antimicrobial resistance (AMR), non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and OneHealth.

Pooling of resources and expertise: Joint efforts in medical technology innovation, field epidemiology training, ethics and quality assurance were identified as priority areas.

Bridging the gap between research and policy: Participants are committed to formal mechanisms for research policy dialogue, ensuring that scientific evidence is converted into effective programs.

The meeting concluded with a collective commitment to move towards joint action through knowledge sharing, ensuring that health research across the region can be pursued directly according to regional needs and priorities, such as a health, epidemic preparedness, infectious diseases, vector-borne diseases, non-communicable diseases, maternal health, and medical innovation. Look for guidance opportunities in specific thematic areas.