

Chinese fuse bird, human flu to create new viruses

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Singapore: Researchers at Harbin Veterinary Research Institute, China, led by Dr Chen Hualan have produced 127 different viruses that are hybrids of H5N1 and H1N1, out of which five were airborne and capable of being passed to guinea pigs. The study has been published online in Science.

The scientists took one gene from the human influenza virus and put it into the bird flu thus producing an easily contagious and dangerous strain of H5N1 bird flu.

Although the lethality of the new strain to humans is still unknown, it is estimated that between 500,000 and 100 million people could die, if the deadly strain could leak from the veterinary laboratory and eventually cause a global pandemic that would effect approximately 500 million people.

The research has drawn a lot of criticism from the global scientific community. However, the Chinese researchers claim that this study could help avoid potentially pandemic scenarios.