

Antiretroviral Therapy effectively reduces HIV deaths: Study

New Delhi, Sep. 16 (India Science Wire): HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that attacks the body's immune system. HIV causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) and interferes with the body's ability to fight infections. About HIV AIDS, it is believed that treatment can provide relief, but this condition cannot be cured. The treatment for HIV is called antiretroviral therapy (ART). ART involves taking a combination of HIV medicines (called an HIV treatment regimen) every day.

Antiretroviral Therapy (ART), the multidrug treatment for HIV infection, is provided free to adults and children living with HIV across India by the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), Government of India. A study by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and NACO has found the Government of India's free ART program under the National AIDS Control Program to be effective in reducing death and increased survival of patients living with HIV. It is revealed in a statement released by ICMR on Wednesday.

Key findings of the study demonstrated the high impact of antiretroviral therapy and showed that the chance of death was halved among people on ART after 5 Years of treatment. The probability of Tuberculosis was lower among persons on ART as compared to those not on ART. Cohorts of people who had initiated ART in 2012 and 2016 and continued taking treatment, underwent viral load testing and over 90% showed that the virus in their blood was adequately suppressed. Over 70% of beneficiaries of ART reported a 'good' or 'very good' quality of life overall and 82% were productively employed.

This report presents the first national-level ART impact evaluation (ART-IE) of the Government of India's free ART programme under the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) which was found to be very cost-effective. This NACO-commissioned study evaluated the impact of NACP's ART programme on various parameters at 396 ART centres (ARTCs) across the country for the period 2012-2017.

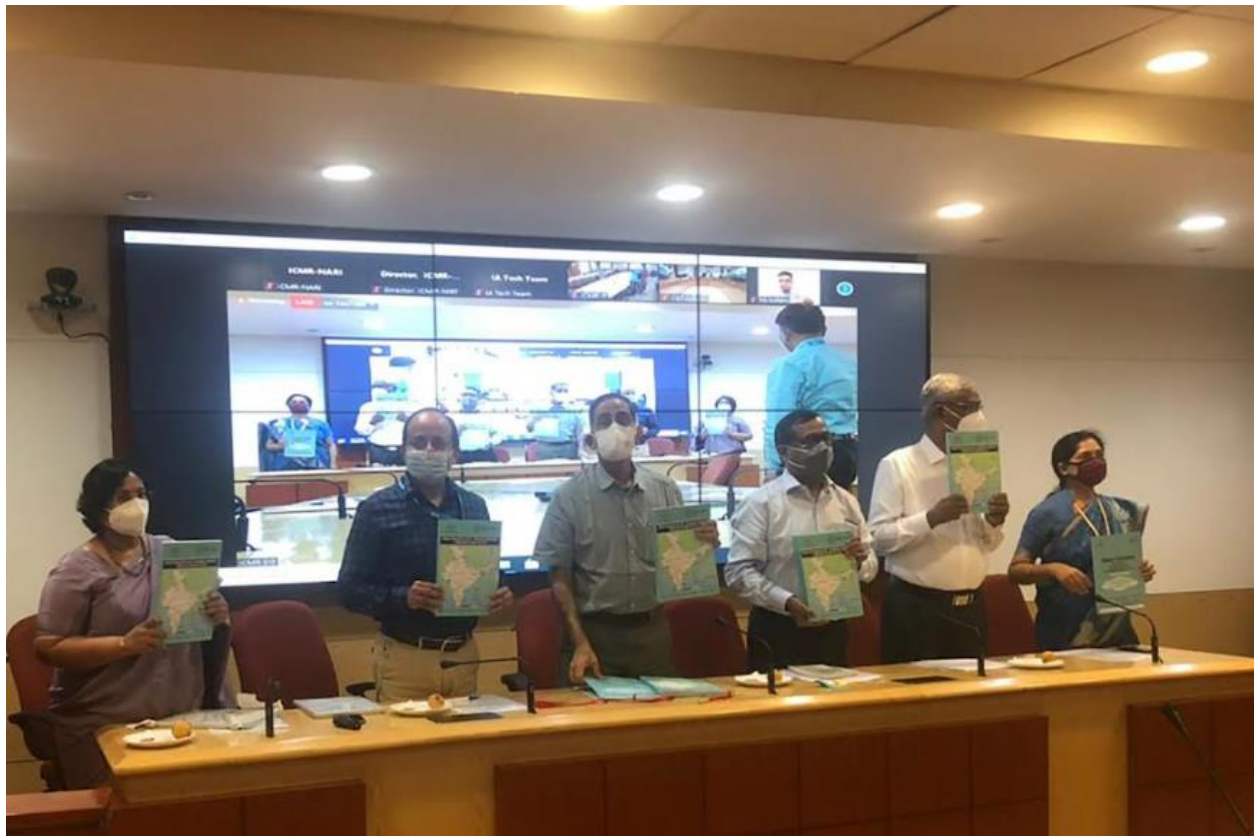
Prof. Dr. Balram Bhargava; Secretary, Department of Health Research (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare), Govt. of India and Director General, ICMR, and Alok Saxena, Additional Secretary & Director General, NACO released the report titled "Impact Evaluation of Antiretroviral Treatment, under the National AIDS Control Programme in India".

This nation-wide study was spearheaded by the ICMR-National AIDS Research Institute (ICMR-NARI) and was implemented through collaboration with five other institutes of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR-National Institute of Epidemiology, ICMR- National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis, ICMR- National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases, ICMR- National Institute Of Medical Statistics, ICMR- National Institute for Research in Environmental Health) and the Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi.

The report provides programmatic directions to improve access to care and enhance prevention efforts. It helps guide research for future interventions needs especially in emerging pockets of HIV infection in different parts of India. (India Science Wire)

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Report on Antiretroviral Treatment (ART) in HIV patients under NACO programme, released by ICMR on Wednesday (Photo: ICMR)