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ICMR starts study on diabetes

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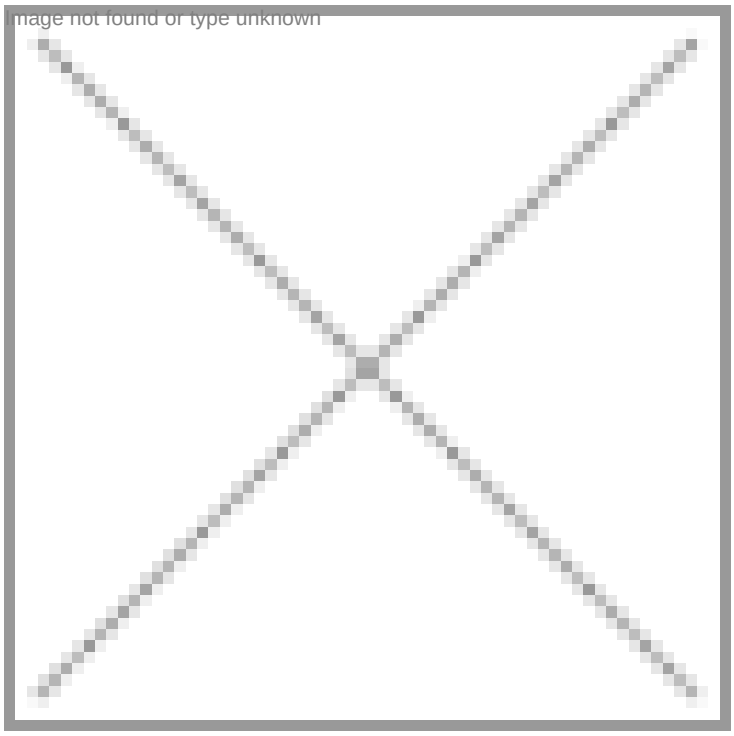
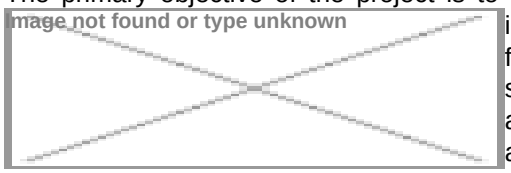


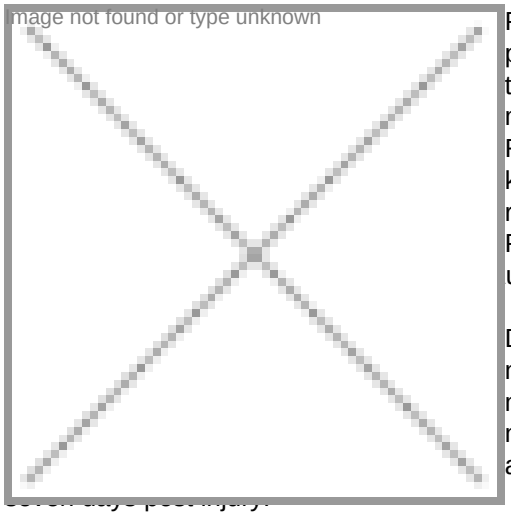
The Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) initiated its Task Force Project on diabetes in September 2006 with centers at different parts of the country during phase I. The regulatory body has now proposed to expand the study by including more centers throughout India.



The primary objective of the project is to understand the disease pattern or types including the geographic variation and incidence and prevalence rate of complications. The secondary objectives are to facilitate research in the areas of basic, clinical (including patterns of care and survival), epidemiological, genetic and molecular levels; promoting awareness about the magnitude of problem among professionals, public health partners; assist in the development of management guidelines; and develop human resources in diabetes epidemiology.

While intending to expand the study during phase II, in which more centers would be recruited, the council invited the applications for participation from clinical researcher/scientist from any medical colleges, government hospitals, institutes and clinics. The existing collaborating centers would provide training to new centers, intensify research activities at their respective centers and facilitate collaboration with state health services. The Intellectual Property Right for data being collected under the study rests with ICMR. The advisory committee set up by the council would review the merits of proposals.

Remedy for traumatic brain injury



Phylogica, an Australian drug discovery company, has successfully demonstrated preclinical proof of concept with a Phylomer peptide drug candidate for the treatment of traumatic brain injury. Using an internationally-established preclinical model, a three-year collaborative study with the Australian Neuromuscular Research Institute and the University of Tasmania has shown the compound, known as PYCAG5, is able to protect neural tissue at lesion sites and significantly reduce inflammation. The peptide was identified using Phylogica's proprietary Phylomer drug discovery platform and the study was funded by the Neurotrauma ustralia Institute of Medical Research.

Dr Paul Watt, CEO of Phylogica, said, "While several Phylomer peptides showed neuroprotective activity in this brain trauma model, PYCAG5 showed outcomes most consistent with therapeutic potential. This Phylomer significantly protected neural issue in the vicinity of the lesion at four days after the induced head injury and decreased the extent of inflammation, increasing the potential for healing at seven days post injury."

Dr Watt indicated that the average loss of neurons from the injured region treated with Phylomer PYCAG5 was less than one-third of the average loss observed for mock-treated control animals, or animals treated with a non-Phylomer peptide.

Hilleman Labs initiates rotavirus vaccine trial

The MSD Wellcome Trust Hilleman Laboratories, established in India with the mission of developing high-impact, affordable vaccines for people in developing countries in an innovative and sustainable way, announced that the organization's first project will be a feasibility study into how new technologies might be used to develop a rotavirus vaccine designed specifically with developing country's needs in mind.

Formulations based on dissolving thin strips or granules will be examined for their potential to improve product stability, ease of use, transportation and affordability. The therapeutic focus of the project has been selected because of the tremendous global impact of rotavirus diarrhea on childhood mortality. If the initial study is successful, options to further develop the technology for rotavirus and other oral vaccines of importance to a developing country health will be explored.

The project is a collaboration among the Hilleman Laboratories, MSD and Medicine in Need (MEND), an international non-profit organization specializing in the application of advanced vaccine formulation technologies. For this feasibility study, MEND is providing the formulation technology and MSD is providing components of its existing rotavirus vaccine. The World Health Organization estimates that every year 10- 50 percent of vaccines may be wasted globally because of temperature control, shipping, and other logistical issues.