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ICMR runs trial of blood bag delivery under iDrone Initiative

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This study will lead to development of SOPs for wider applicability and use of drones for delivery of blood bags and the components



In continuance with the national mission of expanding drone ecosystem in India, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has successfully conducted a trial run of blood bag delivery by drones under its iDrone initiative, in New Delhi.

The trial run as part of a path breaking validation study has been undertaken for the first time in the country by the collaborative efforts of ICMR, Lady Hardinge Medical College (LHMC), New Delhi, Government Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS), Greater Noida and Jaypee Institute of Information Technology (JIIT), Noida. The inaugural trial flight carried 10 units of whole blood samples from GIMS and LHMC in visual line of sight.

LHMC and GIMS are included as centres for supplying blood bags and testing of the samples, while JIIT is acting as the implementation centre for drone sorties. The protocol development, study designing, implementation, and coordination of the project are being undertaken by scientists from ICMR-headquarters.

Highlighting the significance of the event, Dr Rajiv Bahl, Director General, ICMR emphasised that this 'i-DRONE' was first used during COVID-19 pandemic by ICMR for distributing vaccines to unreachable areas. "Today, we are transporting blood & blood-related products, which are supposed to be kept at a low temperature. After the experiment, we found that not only can we maintain the temperature, but there was also no damage to the products transported. We sent another sample through an ambulance & if there are no differences in the samples sent using the two modes, then this drone will be used all over India", he said.

The investigators from LHMC, GIMS and JIIT will further conduct drone flights for validating the quality of packed red blood cells, fresh frozen plasma, platelets in this study. The findings of this study will provide scientific evidence from India for examining the impact of drone transportation on blood products.