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ICMR releases stringent guidelines for stem cell research

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The national guidelines for stem cell research (2017) made by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is looking at suspending commercial banking of stem cells derived from biological materials such as cord tissue, placenta, tooth extract and menstrual blood.

In the recommendations made by ICMR, it has been stated that there is no scientific evidence to substantiate the clinical benefits of these stem cells.

Accordingly, the ICMR has issued guidelines stating that commercial banking of all biological materials, other than umbilical cord blood, is not permitted until further notification.

At the same time, ICMR has approved the stem-cell treatment for 30 odd categories of diseases mostly cancer.

The apex medical research agency listed 20 types of indications (diseases) for adults and another 13 categories of indications for children below 18 years, where stem cell treatment are permitted. Besides cancers, some complicated congenital diseases are on that list.

The guidelines also mention that every other therapeutic use of stem cells shall be treated as investigational and conducted only in the form of a clinical trial after obtaining necessary regulatory approvals.