

Clinical trials in India

This is with reference to the News item 'India, ideal destination for clinical trials'¹. The above title is apt for Western multinationals rather than for Indian/Third World citizens, as it does not reflect caution, though the text mentions some precautions to be taken. As clinical trials are a serious issue, views need to be stated point-blank. A more apt title should have been 'India being targetted as an ideal destination for clinical trials – Beware'.

I wish to slightly restate the words of the author. Since India and other developing/under-developed countries have a plethora of poor and uneducated people, multinational companies are targetting these countries for conducting clinical trials of news drugs. Further, in these countries, regulatory laws and monitoring also are minimal/weak and corruption is high, which makes them ideal for clinical trials. Conscientious people in these countries and some international NGOs have been emphasizing that people in the Third World countries are used as guinea pigs for such experiments! In a country like India where there is ram-

pant organ trade due to poverty, multinationals are lured to conduct their clinical trials.

I remember reading an article on child prostitution in Bangladesh. Many children are given steroids to accelerate their growth, so that they can enter the profession early and easily. Such a thing cannot happen without the involvement of drug companies/medical practitioners, apart from the Government's apathy. We really do not know how many such trials are being conducted on different target groups in Third World countries.

I find some keywords missing in text, for example, rDNA products as drugs, gene therapy, 'informed consent'. I wish to emphasize on the mandatory requirement of 'informed consent'. A patient and his/her family members are due to be adequately and authentically appraised of the clinical trials to be conducted. This is all the more difficult in the case of uneducated people, children and mentally-challenged people. I wonder whether the Confederation of Indian Industry, while conducting its study,

has bothered (a) to clarify whether there has been 'informed consent' as above; (b) to know how many trials have proved fatal. Is there timely and adequate compensation in such cases to the patient and/or his/her family members? (c) to check whether the patient and his/her family receive adequate remuneration during the trial period and for a reasonable time duration after the trial period.

In the process of receiving medical assistance, outsourcing revenue and promotion of medical research, we should follow 'bioethics' and not play havoc with poor, uneducated and otherwise helpless people.

1. De, Minakshi, *Curr. Sci.*, 2005, **89**, 597.

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NEWS

Asthmatic and allergic disorders mitigation mission

Asthmatic as well as allergic disorders are increasing in our country due to different reasons. A mitigation mission (SMM 0006) is being organized at the all-India level. The participating laboratories under this programme are IGIB, New Delhi; ICT, Hyderabad; CCMB, Hyderabad; ITRC, Lucknow and RRL-Jammu. IICB, Kolkata has been appointed as the coordinating laboratory.

Major objectives of this mission include:

- Advanced level research on the target molecules of asthma like 5-LO (a leu-

kotriene producing enzyme), IgE, phosphodiesterase, etc.

- Extraction, identification and purification of herbal preparations/molecules showing activity on early and late phase pathways of allergic diseases.
- Chemical screening by fingerprinting and purification by gel-permeation, ion-exchange and reverse phase chromatography.
- Screening of promising molecules through *in vivo* animal models.
- Determination of chemical structure of effective molecules for better per-

formance and chemical synthesis, designing of molecules for better performance and chemical synthesis.

- Identification of new pollens and fungal allergens for creating awareness among masses.

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