Fear of drug resistance

Why in news?

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Union health ministry has eased norms on the sale of the antiviral medicines used to treat H1N1 (swine flu) to make them more widely available.

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What are schedule X and schedule H1 drugs?

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- Drugs under Schedule X require three copies of prescription for the doctor, patient and chemist.
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- They are to be sold by a chemist who holds a special Schedule X licence.
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- Schedule H1 drug requires only one copy of the prescription and they can be sold by all chemists.
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What is the current move?

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- Oseltamivir and Zanamivir are antiviral drugs that block the actions of influenza virus types A and B in the body.
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- During the H1N1 pandemic in 2009, the health ministry put these antiviral medicines in the Schedule X category of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules.
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- They are now taken off the restrictive Schedule X and placed under Schedule H1.
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- This move is made to provide better access to these medicines.

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What is the concern?

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- India is already concerned of antibiotic resistance and related hazards.
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- e.g Multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB).
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- Medical experts now believe that the unrestricted availability of these antiviral drugs could lead to more casual use which eventually leads to severe drug resistance.
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Quick Facts

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H1N1

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Influenza A(H1N1) virus is the subtype of influenza A virus that was the most common cause of human influenza in 2009. *H1N1* flu is also known as swine flu.

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Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945

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It is an act of the Parliament of India which contains provisions for classification of drugs under given schedules and there are guidelines for the storage, sale, display and prescription of each schedule.

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Drug resistance

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Antimicrobial resistance occurs when microorganisms such as bacteria,

viruses, fungi and parasites change in ways that render the medications used to cure the infections they cause ineffective.

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Source: The Hindu

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