India’s Public Health

What is CDC’s role in India’s health sector?

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- The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) works with more than 60 countries worldwide.
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- Our collaborations have grown over the years. These include global health security, improving HIV prevention, eradicating polio, better prevention of non-communicable diseases including heart attacks, strokes and cancer, working to eliminate measles and assisting India for organising a Kumbh Mela.
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- CDC and India’s ministry of health and family welfare (MoHFW) together established an **immunisation surveillance network** covering all states, launched the **first Indian Epidemic Intelligence Service training programme**, strengthened tracking of healthcare-associated infections and lab diagnosis and intensified tracking fever and encephalitis syndrome across 15 states.
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- Recently, CDC and the Indian government collaborated in a comprehensive outbreak investigation that identified a naturally occurring fruit toxin in litchi as the source of acute encephalopathy in children in Muzaffarpur, Bihar.
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- The previously unexplained illness was caused by a **toxin in litchi fruit causing low blood sugar, particularly in children who had not eaten dinner.**
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- Working closely with the MoHFW, CDC reduced the outbreak’s toll through several measures, including a public education campaign in Muzaffarpur to encourage families to ensure that children regularly ate an evening meal, and making recommendations for healthcare professionals to initiate rapid glucose correction for suspected illness.
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Global Health Security Agenda:

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- The **Global Health Security Initiative** (GHSI) is an international partnership between countries in order to supplement and strengthen their preparedness to respond to threats of biological, chemical, radio-nuclear terrorism (CBRN) and pandemic influenza.
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- The combined efforts between CDC and the MoHFW on broader issues are significant as well — none more than our partnership on the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA).
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- The importance of the GHSA cannot be understated in today's interconnected world, where any disease can travel from its source to any other spot on the globe in just a few hours.
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- That's why India's embrace of the GHSA in 2014, as one of the initiative's 17 original partners, is admirable.
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- In the past year, public health officials in India successfully managed more than 35 disease outbreaks in all corners of the country — more than 2,000 people received training to strengthen and expand India's ability to detect disease early and respond quickly and with certainty; laboratories have been strengthened and can rapidly diagnose more pathogens than ever before.
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Way Ahead:

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- We must better detect and respond to known and unidentified pathogens across every district. Hypertension continues to contribute to increased illness and death.
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- According to the WHO, more than 20 crore people in India have uncontrolled high blood pressure. Simple, low-cost, generic medications could prevent heart attacks, strokes and other complications.
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- The key triad in public health is **political will, technical rigour and managerial excellence.**
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- Whether the problem is tuberculosis, drug-resistant and emerging infections or high blood pressure, getting these three areas right can save millions of lives.
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