



Revised ICMR Communications Guidelines 2026

Overall Guidance

- Dr. Rajiv Bahl, Secretary DHR & Director General, ICMR
- Dr. Sanghamitra Pati, Additional Director General, ICMR

Developed by the Policy & Communications Division, ICMR:

- Dr. Saritha Nair, Scientist F & Head, Policy & Communications Division, ICMR HQ
- Dr. Enna Dogra Gupta, Scientist D, Policy & Communications Division, ICMR HQ
- Dr. Yadav Shyamjeet Maniram, Scientist C, Policy & Communications Division, ICMR HQ

With support from Global Health Strategies (GHS)

- Kaushik Bose, Vice President, GHS
- Torsha Dasgupta, Senior Manager, GHS
- Alika Raina, Programme Associate, GHS

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	3
Chapter 1: Overview of the Policy	4
Chapter 2: Protocol & Practices for Institutional Communications	6
Chapter 3: Protocol & Practices for Research Communications	8
Chapter 4: Protocol & Practices for Crisis Communications	10
Chapter 5: Roles & Responsibilities	13
Chapter 6: Managing Media Communications	15
Chapter 7: Managing Social Media Communications	17
Annexure A: Prohibited Actions for Extramural Researchers and Collaborators	20
Annexure B: Sample Templates	21
Annexure C: Institutional Positioning and Boilerplate	23

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Form
ADG	Additional Director General
DG	Director General
DHR	Department of Health Research
GoI	Government of India
HQ	Headquarters
ICMR	Indian Council of Medical Research
NCO	Nodal Communications Officer
PI	Principal Investigator
P&C Division	Policy & Communications Division
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
X	Formerly Twitter

Chapter 1: Overview of the Policy

1.1. Background

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is the apex body in India for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research. Its mandate includes conducting and supporting medical research for the benefit of society, and translating innovations into products and processes for integration into the public health system.

Effective communication is critical to fulfilling this mandate. While ICMR engages in a wide range of communication activities, key priorities include the dissemination of research and evidence, information about ICMR and its network of Institutes, and funding opportunities offered by the organization. Ensuring that these and other forms of essential information are conveyed accurately, clearly, and accessibly to all stakeholders, including researchers, policymakers, media, and the general public, is vital.

To promote consistency and effectiveness across all communication channels, this Revised Communications Policy ("Policy" hereafter) has been developed. It replaces the ICMR Media Policy of 2017 and should be read in conjunction with the Social Media Guidelines 2018.

1.2. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide a clear framework for all individuals involved with ICMR either directly or through collaboration to guide their communications activities. The policy outlines protocols for different types of communication to ensure that information shared is accurate, timely and appropriate. It also sets out roles and responsibilities to protect and uphold ICMR's name, credibility and reputation across all platforms and audiences.

1.3. Objectives

The Policy aims to achieve the following the key objectives:

- To ensure consistency, accuracy and accountability in all communications from ICMR.
- To establish clear protocols for media engagement and social media use for institutional, research, and crisis communications.
- To support effective dissemination of scientific findings and public health information to diverse audiences, including policymakers, research community, healthcare fraternity and the public.
- To safeguard ICMR's institutional reputation by minimizing the risk of misinformation, misrepresentation or unauthorized communication.
- To build capacity across the ICMR network for strategic communication aligned with ICMR's mission, vision and mandate.

1.4. Applicability

This Policy applies to all individuals working for or associated with ICMR. This includes but is not limited to:

- All staff (scientists, technical officers, project scientists, fellows, consultants, and contractual workers) at the ICMR Headquarters and ICMR Institutes;
- Staff working in Field Units, Multi-Disciplinary Research Units (MRUs), and Model Rural Health Research Units (MRHRUs) under ICMR and its Institutes;
- Research Teams of ICMR-Collaborating Centre of Excellence (CCoEs);
- Collaborators and grantees of Small Grants, Intermediate Grants and Centre for Advanced Research (CAR);
- Chairs and Emeritus Scientists.

1.5. Scope of Communications

This policy outlines protocols for three key categories of communication undertaken by ICMR and its network:

1.5.1. Institutional Communications

These refer to all public communications representing the views, positions, or activities of ICMR and its Institutes. They include, but are not limited to:

- Official announcements, press releases, and leadership statements
- Public communication on ICMR programs, missions, and strategic initiatives
- Updates on institutional operations, policies, partnerships, funding, or administrative matters
- Invitations or calls for collaborations, proposals, tenders, or expressions of interest (EOIs)
- Recruitment advertisements and internship/fellowship opportunities
- Participation in government initiatives, national missions, or public campaigns

1.5.2. Research Communications

These refer to communications by ICMR scientists, researchers, and affiliated personnel related to their scientific work or expertise. They include, but are not limited to:

- Dissemination of peer-reviewed research findings, publications, or preprints
- Science communication through media interviews, podcasts, blog posts, or op-eds
- Participation in webinars, panels, or conferences involving public or media audiences
- Responses to media queries on specific health/scientific topics in an expert capacity
- Contributions to public education around research areas or methodologies

1.5.3. Crisis Communications

These refer to any communication related to urgent, sensitive, or high-impact situations. They include, but are not limited to:

- Disease outbreaks or public health emergencies
- Data breaches, controversies, or misinformation involving ICMR or its research
- Legal, ethical, or regulatory issues involving ICMR or its personnel
- Media inquiries on politically or socially sensitive topics.

Chapter 2: Protocol & Practices for Institutional Communications

This chapter outlines the procedures for managing communications at both the ICMR Headquarters (HQ) and individual ICMR Institutes. It defines the roles of personnel involved and specifies protocols for engagement with media and social media platforms.

2.1. At the ICMR Headquarters (HQ)

2.1.1. Personnel

The Director General (DG) serves as the primary spokesperson for ICMR at the Headquarters. Other members of the leadership may engage with the media or public only upon explicit authorization from the DG. The Policy and Communications (P&C) Division holds the primary responsibility for managing institutional communications. All staff, including Division Heads, Chairs, Emeritus Scientists, and others, must coordinate with the P&C Division when communicating on behalf of ICMR.

2.1.2. Protocol

For Media Communications

Any staff member (including Division Heads, Chairs, Emeritus Scientist) receiving a media request or intending to proactively engage with the media, where their statements could be interpreted as representing ICMR's official position, must immediately inform the Policy and Communications (P&C) Division. The formal protocol for media engagement is as follows:

- All media requests or queries must be routed to the P&C Division for review.
- The P&C Division will assess the request and determine whether to proceed with a response.
- If approved, the concerned individual may prepare a draft response which must be submitted to the P&C Division for review.
- The P&C Division will verify that the response does not contain sensitive information and will grant final approval prior to any communication with the media.

For Social Media Dissemination

Any proposed content or updates intended for posting on ICMR's official social media accounts must be submitted as a request to the P&C Division. The formal protocol for social media dissemination is as follows:

- Requests for social media posts must be submitted to the P&C Division.
- The P&C Division may seek additional information or clarification if necessary.
- Only the P&C Division or representatives authorized by the DG may publish content on ICMR's official social media accounts.

2.2. At the ICMR Institutes

2.2.1. Personnel

The Institute Director serves as the primary spokesperson for the respective ICMR Institute. Other members of the leadership may engage with the media or public only with explicit authorization from the Director. The Nodal Communications Officer (NCO) holds primary responsibility for managing institutional communications at the institute level. All staff, including Department Heads, Chairs, Emeritus Scientists, and others, must coordinate with the NCO when communicating on behalf of the ICMR Institute.

2.2.2. Protocol

For Media Communications

Any institute staff member receiving a media request or intending to proactively engage with the media, where their statements may be construed as representing the Institute or ICMR, must immediately inform the NCO. The formal protocol for media engagement is as follows:

- All media requests or queries must be submitted to the NCO for review.
- The NCO will evaluate the request and determine whether a response is appropriate.
- Upon approval, the staff member may draft a response, which must be submitted to the NCO for vetting.
- The NCO will ensure the response is clear, accurate, and free of sensitive information before granting approval to communicate or share it with the media.
- If necessary, the NCO may consult with the Policy and Communications (P&C) Division at the Headquarters for additional guidance and support.

For Social Media Dissemination

Any content or updates intended for the Institute's official social media channels must be submitted as a request to the NCO. Only the NCO or authorized personnel may post on these platforms. The formal protocol for social media dissemination is as follows:

- Requests for social media content must be submitted to the NCO.
- The NCO may request additional information or clarification before approving the post.
- Only the NCO or personnel authorized by the Director are permitted to publish content on the Institute's official social media accounts.

Chapter 3: Protocol & Practices for Research Communications

This chapter outlines the protocols and practices governing the communication of research conducted within ICMR Institutes (intramural) as well as that funded or supported by ICMR (extramural). It provides clear guidance on who may speak about ICMR-affiliated research, the conditions under which findings can be shared, and the required approvals for media engagement and public dissemination.

3.1. Intramural Research (within ICMR Institutes)

This section applies to research conducted within ICMR institutes by scientists, staff, and collaborators working under the oversight of ICMR and its Institutes.

3.1.1. Official Spokespersons

The Principal Investigator (PI) of the study, or a member of the research team authorized by the PI, may serve as a spokesperson for the research study, provided that prior approval is obtained from the Director General at the HQ or Director of the respective ICMR institute.

3.1.2. Communication Process

- The Principal Investigator (PI) may communicate about their research only when the study has:
 - Been completed, and
 - Been peer-reviewed and/or published in a journal of repute, and/or
 - Received internal clearance for communication, where relevant.
- The following is not permitted without prior approval from the P&C Division at the ICMR HQ or the Director at the respective Institute:
 - Sharing of unpublished data
 - Communication about ongoing or in-progress research
 - Disclosure of preliminary findings
- For any proposed media engagement, press release, or public statement, prior approval must be obtained from the NCO at the ICMR Institute where the PI is based or P&C Division at ICMR Headquarters.
- All communication must be coordinated with the P&C Division/Institute NCO to ensure appropriate framing.

3.2. Extramural Research (ICMR-funded or in collaboration with ICMR):

This section applies to researchers and institutions funded by ICMR or working in collaboration with ICMR, but not directly affiliated as internal staff.

3.2.1. Official Spokespersons

- The Principal Investigator (PI) of the study, or a member of the research team authorized by the PI, may serve as a spokesperson for the research study, subject to providing written notice to the ICMR Program Officer in advance.
- Any public statement regarding the study, its methodology, findings, or implications, made through media, social media, or in public forums must:

- Be reviewed and approved in advance by ICMR; and
 - Be accurate, clearly framed, and free of any language suggesting ICMR endorsement, unless such endorsement has been explicitly authorized.
- The PI must acknowledge ICMR support as per grant terms but must not:
 - Claim institutional affiliation with ICMR
 - Use ICMR branding or logos without permission

3.2.2. Communication Process

- **Pre-award and funding announcements:**

Grantees or collaborators must not announce or publicize that they have received funding, partnership, or support from ICMR until:

- ICMR has officially communicated the grant award, and
- Public notification has been issued by ICMR or express approval is obtained from the ICMR Program Officer.

- **During the course of research:**

- Grantees may not comment publicly on ongoing research, including preliminary data or hypotheses.
- Media engagement or public presentations must be approved by the relevant ICMR Program Officer, and shared in advance with ICMR for review.
- Any reference to ICMR must be factually accurate and not imply ICMR co-authorship, endorsement, or policy alignment unless explicitly confirmed
- All research outputs must acknowledge ICMR funding/support as per guidelines.

- **On sensitive topics:**

No public statements or commentary may be made on issues that:

- Are currently under regulatory, legal, or ethical review
- Are sensitive in terms of national health policy, vaccine safety, drug efficacy, or outbreak control
- May influence public behaviour or perception (e.g., early trial data, health interventions, diagnostics)

In such cases, grantees must consult the ICMR Program Officer and P&C Division, and may be asked to withhold communication until further notice.

- **Use of ICMR Name, Logo, or Affiliation**

The use of ICMR's name, logo, and institutional affiliation is prohibited in the following without explicit permission from the P&C Division:

- Press releases
- Event banners, posters, or websites
- Research publications or public presentations

A full list of Prohibited Actions for Extramural Researchers and Collaborators is available in Annexure A.

Chapter 4: Protocol & Practices for Crisis Communications

This chapter outlines the procedures and protocols for managing communication during crises that may impact public health, institutional reputation, or operational security at ICMR and its Institutes.

4.1. What Constitutes a Crisis

The following situations may be considered a crisis. The final determination rests with the Director General and authorized leadership at ICMR Headquarters, and with the Director at the respective Institute.

4.1.1. Public Health Crises

- Emergence or escalation of infectious disease outbreaks
- Unexpected adverse effects from vaccines, drugs, or diagnostics developed or validated by ICMR
- Misinformation or disinformation campaigns targeting ICMR or its findings

4.1.2. Reputational or Institutional Crises

- Allegations of research misconduct, ethical breaches, or data fabrication
- Legal or regulatory investigations involving ICMR personnel or research
- Allegations or incidents involving sexual harassment or misconduct by ICMR personnel
- Unauthorized or controversial use of ICMR's name, logo, or branding
- Leaked or misinterpreted communications that risk public confusion or panic
- Negative media coverage with potential to damage ICMR's credibility

4.1.3. Operational or Security Crises

- Cybersecurity breaches, data leaks, or sabotage affecting research systems
- Physical threats or security incidents at ICMR institutes or HQ
- Internal emergencies with potential public or media visibility

4.1.4. Discretionary Authority

- Any situation that does not strictly fall within the categories listed above may also be deemed a crisis if so adjudged by the Director General or the concerned Institute Director.

4.2. Authorized Spokespersons During a Crisis

Only the following individuals are authorized to speak publicly or to the media and on social media on behalf of ICMR during a crisis:

- At ICMR Headquarters (HQ): Director General (DG), Additional Director General(s) or any specific official designated by the DG in writing for a particular issue
- At ICMR Institutes: The Director of the respective Institute or any specific official designated by the Director, after obtaining prior permission from, or after informing, the DG or concerned ADG.

Exception: In the event of a crisis of national significance, only the DG is authorized to speak on behalf of ICMR and its Institutes.

4.3. Crisis Communication Protocol

4.3.1. Centralization of Communication

- During a crisis, all external communication must be centralized. Only individuals authorized and listed as official spokespersons may communicate with the media, post on social media, or engage in public communications regarding the situation.
- All media inquiries must be referred immediately to the P&C Division at ICMR Headquarters or to the NCO at the concerned Institute, as appropriate.

4.3.2. Clearance for Public Statements

- No staff member may give interviews, issue press statements, respond to media emails, or make social media posts related to the crisis without prior written clearance from the authorized leadership.
- Where required, the Director General or Institute Director may constitute a special internal crisis response team and brief them on approved communication lines.
- All other staff are expected to refrain from making speculative comments or any statements, including in informal settings.

4.3.3. Review, Approval, and Coordination

- All public communications during a crisis must be vetted by the P&C Division (for HQ-led responses) or the NCO (for Institute-led responses) and must receive final approval from the Director General or the concerned Institute Director.
- All staff are expected to provide full cooperation and timely support to the P&C Division and NCO in fulfilling this responsibility.
- In the case of an Institute-level crisis, the NCO must also keep the P&C Division at ICMR Headquarters informed of all actions taken and any planned or ongoing media responses.

4.4. Crisis Management Core Team

In the event of a crisis, a Core Crisis Management Team may be constituted by the Director General or Additional Director General at ICMR Headquarters, or by the Director at the concerned Institute. This team will comprise senior leadership and, where necessary, external experts. The team will be responsible for the following:

- Convening rapidly to assess the situation and formulate a coordinated communication and response strategy.
- Working in close coordination with the P&C Division and relevant Institute NCOs to ensure message consistency across platforms.
- Advising on all public-facing communication, including press releases, media interviews, public clarifications, and online statements.
- Consulting subject matter experts from within or outside ICMR to ensure accuracy and credibility in messaging.
- Determining, in consultation with the P&C Division or NCO and authorized leadership, the appropriate crisis response mechanisms, including:
 - Organizing press conferences
 - Issuing official statements, FAQs, or background notes
 - Responding to online and media queries
 - Deciding on the necessity and timing of media interviews

For Institute-level crises, the Institute Director must also remain in regular coordination with the DG/Additional DG and the P&C Division at HQ to ensure alignment in strategy, messaging, and public communication.

Chapter 5: Roles & Responsibilities

This chapter defines the roles and responsibilities of key personnel involved in communication across ICMR Headquarters and individual Institutes. It outlines the central role of the Policy & Communications (P&C) Division and Nodal Communication Officers (NCOs) in managing institutional messaging, media relations, and strategic outreach.

5.1. At the ICMR Headquarters

5.1.1. Role of the P&C Division

All communications activities at ICMR Headquarters will be centrally managed by the Policy & Communications (P&C) Division. As the designated authority for institutional communications, the Head of the P&C Division must be consulted and provide formal sign-off on any material intended for external circulation that could potentially impact ICMR's image or reputation. This includes, but is not limited to, content shared with the media, public-facing publications, press releases, or any communications materials disseminated to external stakeholders.

5.1.2. Key responsibilities of the P&C Division

- **Media Communications**
 - Manage all media requests related to ICMR Headquarters or involving two or more ICMR Institutes
 - Review and vet incoming media queries and coordinate official responses in consultation with subject matter experts
 - Draft and issue press releases, public statements, and official updates on behalf of ICMR
 - Coordinate media interviews, briefings, and press conferences as required
- **Social Media Management**
 - Oversee and manage content across ICMR's official social media handles
 - Monitor and analyze social media engagement and coverage of ICMR activities
- **Public Communications and Publications**
 - Respond to parliamentary questions (PQs) related to ICMR's activities and research
 - Review and coordinate creation of brochures, newsletters, videos, and website content
 - Ensure timely dissemination of updates on ICMR's research, grant opportunities, and public health initiatives
 - Manage external communications to diverse audiences including media, academia, policymakers, and the public
- **Strategic Support and Capacity Building**
 - Provide strategic communications guidance to ICMR institutes and departments
 - Monitor media coverage and reputational risks; prepare communication impact reports
 - Provide routine communications training to NCOs across ICMR Institutes and media engagement support to scientists and staff

5.2. At the ICMR Institute

5.2.1. Role of the NCO

At each ICMR institute, the Director must nominate a Nodal Communications Officer (NCO) who will serve as the key liaison between institute staff and the media. The NCO will work under the supervision of the Institute Director and in close coordination with the P&C Division at HQ.

5.2.2. Key Responsibilities of the NCO

- **Media Communications**
 - Serve as the interface between the Institute Director, staff, and media representatives
 - Manage all media inquiries and coordinate responses in consultation with the Director
 - Facilitate media interactions, interviews, press conferences, and institute visits
 - Coordinate, disseminate and follow up on press releases and official announcements
 - Advise researchers and staff on effective media engagement and story placement
 - Maintain and regularly update a media contact database (regional and national)
 - Assist in drafting holding statements, FAQs, and responses during crises or sensitive situations. A sample template for a holding statement is available in Annexure C.

- **Social Media Engagement**
 - Manage the Institute's social media accounts
 - Develop engaging content (e.g., infographics, videos) for dissemination
 - Provide timely updates and highlights from the Institute's work for use on official handles and websites

- **Public Engagement**
 - Ensure that all external-facing platforms of the institute, including the website are up-to-date, informative, and consistent with ICMR branding guidelines.
 - Oversee the timely revision and availability of institutional brochures and key information materials.
 - Ensure the development and regular updating of an institutional film in both English and relevant regional language(s) to aid outreach and stakeholder engagement.
 - Coordinate with relevant departments for sourcing updated data, achievements, and visual content.
 - Proactively engage with diverse audiences, including medical colleges, schools, and community members, to disseminate information about ICMR's research, institutional initiatives, and available opportunities.

- **Crisis Communication**
 - Assist in drafting holding statements, FAQs, and media responses during crises in consultation with the Institute Director and P&C Division.
 - Support preparedness and responsiveness in coordination with HQ during high-risk or high-visibility events.

Chapter 6: Managing Media Communications

This chapter provides detailed guidance for P&C Division and NCOs on managing interactions with the media to ensure that all communications reflect ICMR's professionalism, credibility, and institutional values.

6.1. Guidelines for Regional Media Engagement

- **Establish and Maintain a Regional Media Network**
 - Identify and maintain an up-to-date list of health, science, and public health journalists working with local and regional media outlets.
 - Maintain a structured media database that includes contact details, affiliations, and area of coverage.
 - Proactively introduce the Institute's mandate to key media representatives to build familiarity.

- **Engage with Media Proactively**
 - Organize periodic media briefings or interactions to share institutional updates, research highlights, and relevant public health developments.
 - Extend invitations to regional journalists for selected institutional events, awareness campaigns, and field visits, where appropriate.
 - Disseminate clearly written media notes or summaries of research outcomes to support accurate reporting.

- **Ensure Consistent and Professional Communication**
 - When receiving a media query, seek essential details including the topic of interest, intended angle or story, deadline, media outlet, and the format in which the content will appear (print, digital, broadcast).
 - Request that all queries be submitted in writing via email.
 - Consult the relevant scientist or division to prepare a response that is scientifically accurate and consistent with institutional policies.
 - Obtain necessary approvals from the Institute Director prior to releasing any official response.
 - Respond to media queries formally via email only.
 - Refrain from providing any verbal statements or on-the-record comments over telephone or informal channels.

6.2. Unacceptable Media Interfaces

- **Inappropriate Media Interactions**

All ICMR staff are expected to engage with the media in a manner that reflects the highest standards of professional conduct and integrity. The following actions are strictly prohibited:

 - Sharing confidential content such as internal emails, draft research papers, grant proposals, or any documents not meant for public circulation.
 - Disclosing embargoed content or unpublished research findings before official release or approval.
 - Distributing photographs, videos, or audio recordings of individuals or facilities without obtaining prior written consent from the subjects (individuals/guardians or persons responsible).

- Sharing internal or sensitive information in return for personal gain, including money, gifts, or favours.
 - Making personal or derogatory comments about other ICMR colleagues or leadership through the media.
 - Using media platforms to air grievances rather than using designated internal grievance redressal systems.
 - Making statements that could cause reputational damage to ICMR through speculative, inaccurate, or unverified commentary.
- **Handling Grievances and Internal Concerns**

ICMR staff are strongly discouraged from sharing unresolved internal grievances with the media, including complaints related to workplace misconduct or harassment. Such concerns must be raised through the appropriate internal channels, including designated complaints committees, the Institute Director, or, if necessary, the Director General at ICMR Headquarters.
 - **No Favours or Undue Influence**

ICMR staff must not offer or accept any form of inducement, monetary or otherwise, from media professionals. Such actions may be construed as bribery and are subject to disciplinary and legal consequences. This includes:

 - Offering gifts, hospitality, or payments in exchange for favourable coverage or suppression of stories.
 - Accepting favours in return for privileged or premature access to ICMR materials or insights.

6.3. Maintaining Professionalism in Media Communications

- While responding to negative coverage or addressing controversial media narratives, ICMR staff must maintain composure and professionalism at all times. The following behaviours are unacceptable during media interactions:
 - Confronting, blaming, or publicly attacking journalists or editors, especially over social media.
 - Responding emotionally or defensively to criticism in interviews, briefings, or press statements.
 - Posting personal opinions about media coverage on institutional platforms or personal handles without clearance.
 - Threatening legal action in retaliation for journalistic content without prior discussion and clearance from the Director General (at HQ) or Director (at ICMR Institutes).

If a coverage is factually incorrect, misleading, or harmful, the email template provided in **Annexure C** may be used to request a clarification or correction in a formal, respectful manner. Escalation protocols must be followed as per institutional media engagement policy.

Chapter 7: Managing Social Media Communications

This chapter outlines the protocols and best practices for managing social media communications across ICMR and its Institutes. It defines the scope and purpose of official social media platforms, specifying the types of content that may be shared, and the content review processes to ensure accuracy, scientific credibility, and institutional integrity.

7.1. Official Platforms

- ICMR and its Institutes may have official social media handles on the following platforms, including but not limited to:
 - X (formerly Twitter)
 - Facebook
 - LinkedIn
 - Instagram
 - YouTube
- Only verified or officially designated handles may be used to represent ICMR or any of its institutes. These accounts must not be used for:
 - Personal opinions
 - Political commentary
 - Advocacy unrelated to ICMR's mandate

7.2. Purpose of Social Media Accounts

- Content shared through ICMR and its Institutes' official handles must focus on:
 - Key research findings from intramural or extramural studies supported or conducted by ICMR and its Institutes
 - Institutional announcements (e.g., funding opportunities, research grants, recruitment, fellowships)
 - Events, conferences, or training workshops hosted or supported by ICMR and its Institutes
 - Expert opinions or commentary from ICMR scientists, as published in peer-reviewed journals or mainstream media
 - Honours, achievements, and recognitions earned by ICMR scientists or institutes

7.3. Content Protocol

7.3.1. Dissemination of Research Findings

- Social media posts highlighting ICMR research must be based on published work and presented in a clear, accurate, and accessible manner.
 - Only peer-reviewed, published research findings are to be shared.
 - Scientists must submit a 500-word lay summary or "key findings" blurb upon publication. A standard format/template will be provided in the Annexure.
 - The P&C Division (HQ) or Institute NCO will draft the social media post and get it reviewed for scientific accuracy by the concerned researcher or division.
 - Posts with sensitive or high-impact findings (e.g., related to epidemics, policy-relevant studies, or controversial findings) must receive prior clearance from the DG or Additional DG.

7.3.2. Miscellaneous Updates

- Institutional updates and informational content must follow a structured process for review and timely dissemination.

- Informational posts, institutional updates, and non-research materials (e.g., training announcements or observance days) should be shared with the P&C Division (for HQ handles) or the NCO (for Institute handles) at least 5 working days in advance for review and scheduling.

7.4. Code of Conduct for Institutional Social Media Handles

All content disseminated through the official social media handles of ICMR and its Institutes must uphold the principles of scientific credibility, public trust, and professional integrity. The P&C Division and NCOs are responsible for ensuring that these standards are maintained consistently across platforms.

7.4.1. Essential Practices for Institutional Social Media Handles

- Institutional social media accounts must:
 - Clearly represent the identity and mandate of the ICMR or the respective Institute in their bios and profile information.
 - Apply for and secure platform-specific account verification (e.g., verified badge on X, Facebook, YouTube, etc.) to establish authenticity and enhance credibility.
 - Share only verified, evidence-based content that has been reviewed and cleared by the appropriate scientific or administrative authority.
 - Prioritize the communication of published research findings, public health advisories, policy announcements, and institutional achievements.
 - Ensure that all visual or textual content complies with copyright norms and appropriate attribution standards.

7.4.1. Prohibited Practices for Institutional Social Media Handles

- Institutional handles must not:
 - Post unpublished research, embargoed data, or confidential material without explicit written authorization from the relevant approving authority, i.e., Director General (for HQ) and the Director (for ICMR Institutes).
 - Share personal opinions, advocacy content, or commentary on political or religious matters.
 - Use casual, informal, or unprofessional language that may undermine the credibility of the institution.
 - Circulate content obtained from external sources without verifying its accuracy or obtaining necessary permissions.
 - Engage in public debates, respond to provocative or critical comments, or reply to user interactions directly, whether positive or negative, unless specifically authorized by the Director General (for HQ) or the Director (for ICMR Institutes).
 - Share or amplify media coverage or third-party content that contains factual inaccuracies or misrepresents ICMR's position or work.

7.5 Conduct on Personal Social Media Accounts

ICMR recognizes that its staff may maintain personal social media accounts. While individual accounts are personal in nature, the actions of employees, particularly scientists, senior staff, and public-facing personnel, can influence public perception of ICMR. Therefore, all staff are expected to maintain a high standard of professional conduct online, in alignment with ICMR's values and public responsibilities.

7.5.1. Guiding Principles for Personal Social Media Use

- ICMR staff are encouraged to:

- Include a disclaimer in their social media bios clarifying that “views expressed are personal” when commenting on matters related to science, public health, or governance.
- Amplify and support institutional messages by resharing relevant content from ICMR’s official accounts.
- Share information that is accurate, evidence-based, and consistent with ICMR’s mission.
- Ensure appropriate attribution and respect for intellectual property when posting research outputs, data visualizations, or multimedia.
- Update social media profiles to reflect changes in employment status if they leave or transition from ICMR roles.

7.5.2. Prohibited Conduct on Personal Social Media

- ICMR staff must refrain from:
 - Representing or speaking on behalf of ICMR or its institutes without formal authorization.
 - Posting embargoed findings, unpublished research, or confidential project information.
 - Using official email addresses to register personal or non-institutional social media accounts.
 - Criticizing government policies or engaging in commentary that could be construed as partisan or political.
 - Sharing unverified claims, misinformation, or speculative commentary that may harm public trust or misrepresent scientific evidence.
 - Participating in polarizing or controversial online debates under their institutional identity.

Annexure A: Prohibited Actions for Extramural Researchers and Collaborators

All individuals and institutions receiving funding, support, or collaborating with ICMR are expected to uphold the highest standards of responsible science communication. The following actions are strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary consequences, including termination of funding, disqualification from future support, or legal action, where applicable:

- **Announcing ICMR grants or collaborations prematurely:** No public communication (including social media posts, emails, newsletters, talks, or press releases) may announce or reference ICMR funding, support, or collaboration before official confirmation and communication is issued by ICMR.
- **Discussing unpublished or in-progress research:** Researchers may not share, comment on, or disclose any aspect of a study that is ongoing, not yet peer-reviewed, or under embargo. This includes preliminary results, interim analyses, or speculative insights.
- **Making unauthorized media appearances or public statements:** Grantees must not give interviews, participate in media panels, or publicly present their research related to ICMR funding without informing the relevant ICMR Program Officer and securing approval of the content.
- **Misrepresenting ICMR's role:** Any exaggeration or misrepresentation of ICMR's role in a project – such as claiming co-authorship or institutional endorsement – is not allowed unless officially verified.
- **Commenting on sensitive or policy-linked issues without clearance:** Communication related to health interventions (such as diagnostics, drugs, or vaccines), outbreak responses, regulatory matters, or issues that could influence public behaviour must be cleared through ICMR Program Officer and/or the P&C Division.
- **Implying ICMR endorsement of personal opinions:** Grantees must not suggest or imply that their personal views represent ICMR's institutional stance unless explicitly authorized in writing.
- **Using ICMR name, logo, or branding without permission:** The ICMR name, logo, or institutional affiliation may not be used in any communication material (e.g., event posters, press releases, presentations) without explicit written approval.

Annexure B: Sample Templates

C.1. Email to Editor in case of inaccurate/harmful coverage

This template may be used by P&C Division or the Institute NCO when requesting a clarification, or correction from a media outlet in a professional and constructive manner, following negative or inaccurate coverage.

Subject: Request for Clarification/Correction on [Headline or Article Name]

Dear [Editor's Name],

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing on behalf of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) / [Institute name] regarding the article titled "[Insert Title]" published on [Date] in [Publication Name].

We appreciate your commitment to public health reporting. However, we would like to respectfully highlight a few inaccuracies and contextual clarifications that may be helpful for your readers:

- <Briefly state the incorrect statement> – The correct information is: <Insert correction with source if needed>.*
- <Any misrepresentation of ICMR's role> – We would like to clarify that: <Insert clarification>.*

ICMR remains committed to transparency and scientific rigour, and we can provide an official comment, data, or arrange a briefing with the relevant subject expert.

We respectfully request that the article be updated to reflect the corrected information or that a clarification be issued.

Please feel free to reach out at [Your Phone Number] or [Email Address] for any additional details.

Sincerely,

Full Name

Designation & Institute Name

[Email] | [Phone]

C.2. Crisis Holding Statement

This statement may be used as an initial response to media queries or public concern during an emerging or sensitive situation, pending verification and internal clearance.

Preliminary Statement – Not for Public Release Without Clearance

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and [add Institute Name] is aware of the [incident/topic, e.g., recent reports regarding a suspected outbreak of XYZ] and we are actively coordinating with Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) and relevant health authorities and subject experts.

Our teams are currently verifying the facts and assessing the situation. We will provide a full statement as soon as more information becomes available.

Until then, we urge the public and media to refrain from speculation and rely only on verified updates from official ICMR channels.

For official information, please follow [ICMR's handle/website] or contact [designated spokesperson name and number].

Annexure C: Institutional Positioning and Boilerplate

Consistent and credible representation of ICMR in all external communications is essential to uphold the organization's identity and reputation. Every Institute under the ICMR umbrella is required to use the following standardized text in all relevant public-facing materials.

D.1. ICMR Positioning Statement

All public-facing communications, whether issued by ICMR HQ or any ICMR Institute, must include the following standardized positioning statement to ensure consistency.

"ICMR is India's apex biomedical research organization advancing science, shaping policies, and delivering innovative, real-world solutions to save lives and achieve health for all."

This statement reflects ICMR's institutional identity and must be included, wherever applicable, in the following materials. The language of the positioning statement must not be altered without prior approval from the P&C Division at ICMR Headquarters:

- Media engagements (e.g., press briefings, interviews)
- Institutional brochures and communication materials
- Official presentations and slide decks
- Publicity for events, including banners, flyers, and speaker introductions
- Social media bios and relevant posts

D.2 Boilerplate for Press Releases

All press releases issued by ICMR HQ or any ICMR Institute must include the following boilerplate at the end:

About Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)

ICMR is India's apex biomedical research organization, with over a century of legacy in advancing health. Through its 28 institutes across the country, ICMR conducts and facilitates research to prevent, manage, and treat critical diseases. Its intramural and extramural programs foster a robust ecosystem for health innovation. By generating evidence that shapes policy ICMR is committed to making healthcare more equitable, affordable, and accessible - contributing to a safer and healthier India.

[Insert Institute name] supports this mission through its focus on [insert Institute's vision or mandate].

Visit us at www.icmr.gov.in