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Draft National Health Research Policy 2026 Released for Consultation

15 July 2026 ·

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Draft National Health Research Policy 2026 Released for Consultation

15 July 2026 · 5 min read ·

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WHY IN NEWS

*In , the government released a **draft National Health Research Policy 2026** for public consultation, with feedback invited over the following weeks. The draft, prepared by the **Department of Health Research (DHR)** under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, updates the earlier **National Health Research Policy of 2011** and sets out a roadmap for planning, funding and coordinating health research over the coming decades.*

A DRAFT, NOT YET A POLICY

It is important to be precise about the status of the document. What has been released is a **draft, opened for public consultation**. The government has invited suggestions, critiques and feedback from the public, medical professionals and researchers before the policy is finalised. In other words, the contents described here are proposals, and they may change after the consultation closes.

The draft is significant because it would be the first full revision of the health-research framework since **2011**. Fifteen years is a long time in medical science, and the intervening period, including the experience of managing a major pandemic, has reshaped how governments think about research capacity, self-reliance and the speed at which findings must move from laboratory to clinic.

WHAT THE DRAFT AIMS TO DO

The stated intent of the draft is to strengthen India's **health-research ecosystem**. Its broad objectives, as set out for consultation, include the following.

OBJECTIVE	WHAT IT SEEKS TO ACHIEVE
Ecosystem strengthening	Build research capacity across institutions and disciplines
Coordination	Align research across the many bodies that fund and conduct it
Ethics and quality	Promote ethical conduct and high-quality, credible research
Indigenous innovation	Encourage home-grown research and innovation
Priority alignment	Tie research agendas to national health priorities

The thread running through these objectives is **coordination**. India's health research is spread across universities, medical colleges, government institutes and private laboratories, and a recurring criticism is that effort is duplicated and priorities are set piecemeal. The draft frames a more coherent, nationally directed approach as the way to get greater value from limited resources.

The Institutions That Lead Health Research

Two bodies sit at the centre of India's medical and health research and are well established in this role. The **Department of Health Research (DHR)**, within the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, is the nodal department for health research. The **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** is the **apex** (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/apex/>) body for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research, and it functions as the scientific and technical lead. The draft works within this architecture rather than replacing it, positioning the DHR and ICMR to steer a more coordinated national effort.

THE PROBLEM OF UNDER-INVESTMENT

A central reason a new policy is needed is that India's **public spending on health research is low as a share of GDP**. Underfunding limits the number of researchers, the scale of trials and the ability to sustain long-term studies. A modern research policy is therefore as much about mobilising and sequencing investment as it is about setting scientific priorities, and the draft is expected to lay out a **trajectory** (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/trajectory/>) for raising research spending over the long term.

This links to a wider policy landscape. The **National Health Policy 2017** remains the overarching framework for the health system as a whole, setting goals for access, quality and financing. A dedicated research policy is meant to supply the evidence engine that a well-functioning health system needs, feeding better data and better technologies into service delivery.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR GOVERNANCE AND SELF-RELIANCE

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Health research is not a niche scientific concern; it is a governance and strategic issue. Robust domestic research strengthens the health system by generating evidence for policy, improves the **ethics and regulation of clinical research** so that trials protect participants, and advances **self-reliance in health technologies and vaccines** so that India is less dependent on imports during emergencies. The pandemic underlined how quickly a country's own research and manufacturing capacity can become a matter of national security. By updating a fifteen-year-old framework, the draft attempts to align India's research effort with these contemporary demands, subject to the outcome of the public consultation.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2: Government policies and interventions in the health sector, issues relating to the development and management of health, and the role of institutions in policy formulation.

Prelims pointers:

- The **draft National Health Research Policy 2026** was released for **public consultation** in July 2026 and updates the **National Health Research Policy 2011**.
- The **Department of Health Research (DHR)**, under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, is the nodal department for health research.
- The **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** is the apex body for biomedical research and the scientific and technical lead.
- The **National Health Policy 2017** is the overarching health-policy framework.
- India's **public health-research spending is low as a share of GDP**.
- The draft's aims include ecosystem strengthening, coordination, ethics and quality, indigenous innovation, and alignment with national health priorities.

Mains question: "A strong health-research ecosystem is essential for a resilient health system and for self-reliance in health technologies. In light of the draft National Health Research Policy 2026, discuss the role of research in strengthening India's health system and the challenges of regulation, ethics and funding." (15 marks, 250 words)

FACTS CORNER

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Event (July 2026): Government released the draft National Health Research Policy 2026 for public consultation.

Updates: The National Health Research Policy 2011.

Prepared by: Department of Health Research (DHR), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Scientific lead: Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

Aims: Strengthen the research ecosystem, improve coordination, promote ethics and quality, encourage indigenous innovation, and align research with national health priorities.

Context: National Health Policy 2017 is the overarching framework; India's health-research spending is low as a share of GDP.

Sources: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (<https://mohfw.gov.in/>), Department of Health Research (<https://dhr.gov.in/>), PIB (<https://pib.gov.in/>)

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