

Outbreaks & Public Health Updates

- **Evolving Mpox (Monkeypox) strain detected in Kerala**

Indian scientists reported detecting a **newer Mpox virus variant (Clade Ib)** tied to recent Kerala cases, some linked to foreign travel — suggesting ongoing human-to-human transmission and highlighting the importance of robust surveillance systems.

- **Diarrhoea out-break in Indore (Bhagirathpura)**

Three new diarrhoea cases were confirmed, raising the total hospitalizations amid a water contamination crisis. Officials are urging residents to **boil or filter drinking water** while pipeline upgrades continue.

- **Rising respiratory illness linked to pollution in Hyderabad**

Doctors noted an increase in allergies, bronchitis, sinusitis and related immune responses attributed to poor air quality (high PM2.5 levels), with public health advice to limit outdoor exposure and use masks.

Healthcare System & Research

- **Winter surge in cardiac cases in Kolkata**

Hospitals reported a rise in heart attacks, arrhythmia and cardiovascular admissions — likely driven by severe cold, reduced activity and other risk factors — prompting calls for preventive measures among vulnerable groups.

- **ICMR grant awarded for stem-cell research**

Two Pune scientists won a competitive Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) grant to develop a **novel stem-cell-based therapy for ulcerative colitis**, a chronic condition with limited long-term treatment options.

Ongoing Disease Trends

- **Chickenpox cases continuing to rise in Kerala's Ernakulam district**

Health officials confirmed 228 chickenpox cases through 18 January, primarily among children, though no severe complications have been reported. Vaccination is advised where available.

Broader Public Health Context (Related Ongoing Issues)

- **Indore water-contamination tragedy background** — The ongoing diarrhoea outbreak in Bhagirathpura stems from **bacterial contamination of the municipal water supply**, with hundreds affected and infrastructure concerns cited.
- **Health system priorities & spending concerns** — Analysts note India's high **out-of-pocket healthcare spending** (~50–55 % of total) remains a major barrier to equitable access, urging stronger public financing and universal coverage progress.
- **Global health policy inputs for India** — A *Lancet Commission* report published today outlines a **citizen-centred roadmap for Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** in India emphasizing equitable, quality care and digital integration.