

NTAGI Subcommittee Recommendations Did Not Overlook Crucial Data

We, as individuals who participated in the meeting of the Subcommittee of National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation on the issue of the need and potential of introduction of Hib vaccine in India, wish to respond to the allegation by Dutta and Puliyeel, that the Subcommittee overlooked 'crucial ICMR data'(1). When some of us attended a meeting in Nirman Bhawan on 14 December 2009, one of the authors made the same allegation orally and was told, clearly, that his allegation was untrue and that the data referred to were indeed discussed in the Subcommittee meeting.

The Subcommittee report in question has internal evidence for the fact that the so-called 'crucial ICMR data' were indeed looked at, and not overlooked(2). The study in Anaicut referred to in the correspondence was part of a multi-centre, preparative phase, of an intended Hib vaccine 'probe study', as clearly mentioned in reference 22 of the Subcommittee report(2). The centres were in Chandigarh (under Rajesh Kumar), Kolakata (under SK Bhattacharya) and Vellore (under Anuradha Bose). The study had commenced in late 2005 and ended in the first quarter of 2007. All investigators were invited to discuss their data in the Subcommittee meeting and Kumar and Bose attended, as recorded in *Appendix 1*, List of Participants, which by itself is sufficient evidence that their data were presented and discussed(2). Their data had been discussed in ICMR earlier in January 2008, well ahead of the Subcommittee

meeting in April 2008 according to the Subcommittee report, as per reference 22(2).

The statement that the multi-centre study was not cited in *Appendix 2* is also untrue since it refers twice to the study report as presented to ICMR earlier. The cleaning up of data, analysis and detailed interpretations on the findings had not been completed and written up for publication at that time. In the 2009 December 14 meeting it was mentioned that the paper was under editorial review process. It was published in 2010 May in Indian Journal of Medical Research(3). We wonder what the motivation was for repeating the allegation in a reputed journal, in spite of knowing the truth.

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3. Gupta M, Kumar R, Deb AK, Bhattacharya SK, Bose A, John J, *et al.* Multi-centre surveillance for pneumonia and meningitis among children (<2 yr) for Hib vaccine probe trial preparation in India. *Indian J Med Res* 2010; 131: 649-658.