

## Research findings on Encephalitis

### Why in news?

\n\n

A research paper on epidemic Encephalitis has been realised.

\n\n

### What is Encephalitis?

\n\n

\n

- It is inflammatory brain disease which can cause severe headache and confusion.

\n

- The majority of cases are caused by either a viral infection or the immune system mistakenly attacking brain tissue.

\n

- Mild cases may cause no symptoms or mild flu-like symptoms. Severe cases can be life-threatening.

\n

- Immediate medical attention is required for symptoms such as confusion, hallucinations, seizures, weakness and loss of sensation.

\n

- It can be spread by animal or insect bites or stings.

\n

\n\n

### What is the account of this disease in India?

\n\n

\n

- In India Japanese encephalitis (JE) is most prevalent, it caused by JE virus spread by the bite of infected mosquitoes.

\n

- It's more common in rural and agricultural areas which causes serious brain swelling with a sudden headache, high fever and disorientation.

\n

- Indian public health diagnostic machinery has built around this illness and a

vaccine was also introduced.

\n

- This disease is being prevalent in U.P.'s Gorakhpur district for past three decades.

\n

\n\n

### **Why the disease is epidemic in few parts of India?**

\n\n

\n

- The recent research paper finds an unexpected cause of encephalitis which is recurring for several years in in Malkangiri district of Odisha.

\n

- Researchers finds out it was likely due to the consumption of a wild bean, called Bada Chakunda, which grows freely in the region.

\n

- Several natural toxins had caused fatal dysfunction of the liver, heart and brain in underfed children.

\n

- Even in Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur district, the encephalitis outbreak was traced to this bean.

\n

\n\n

\n

- There are also epidemics in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district which were linked to lychee consumption, again among emaciated children.

\n

- In all these cases, the suspicion of JE, though the epidemiology and symptoms didn't match, which delayed the discovery of the cause.

\n

\n\n

### **What are the concerns the report had pointed out?**

\n\n

\n

- As JE vaccination rates have grown, incidence has shrunk, and a host of other causes of encephalitis, like dengue, scrub typhus, and other disease have emerged to the forefront.

\n

- Yet investigating agencies such as the National Centre for Disease Control and the National Institute of Virology have persisted in focussing on JE.

\n

- There is a problem of archaic format in which encephalitis is reported to the government.

\n

- Under this format, if an encephalitis case cannot be confirmed as JE, doctors tag it as Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES).

\n

- But AES is no diagnosis, just a temporary label for different unnamed diseases.

\n

- Thus doctors by them don't have a clear understanding about the disease due to narrow minded observation.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: The Hindu**

\n

