

# Linking us to superbug unfair: India

Aarti Dhar

NEW DELHI: India has reacted strongly to a study linking a multiple drug-resistant superbug detected in Britain to India and said the bacteria are not a public health threat.

It said Indian hospitals were safe as a number of such bacteria survive in nature and were reported from several other countries.

The conclusions of the study are "loaded with inference" that the antibiotic-resistant organism possibly originated in India, an official statement issued by the Min-

istry of Health and Family Welfare said here on Thursday.

"While such organisms may be circulating more commonly in the world due to international travel, to link it with the safety of surgery hospitals in India and citing isolated examples to show that due to the presence of such organism in Indian environment India is not a safe place to visit is wrong," V.M. Katoch, Director-General of the Indian Council of Medical Research, said here.

Several authors had declared conflict of interest in

the publication. The study was funded by European Union and two pharmaceutical companies - Wellcome Trust and Wyeth - that produce antibiotics for treatment of such cases, the official statement said.

The government also strongly objected to the naming of this enzyme New Delhi metallo beta lactamase -1 (NDM-1) and refuted the conclusion that hospitals in India were not safe for treatment.

Though not disputing the validity of the study, Dr. Katoch said the conclusions

were "unfair" and "scary." The conclusions and interpretations of the study were wrong, scientifically invalid and aimed at creating a scare.

Admitting that such news reports were likely to dent the prospects of medical tourism in the country, Dr. Katoch said correct reporting by the media should inform the people and set the matter right. "Indian hospitals are world class and follow the best practices," he said.

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