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## ICMR conducts trial run of transporting tissue sample mid-surgery through drone in Karnataka

*Upon arrival, the sample was promptly analysed, and the report was electronically conveyed back to the peripheral hospital. Subsequently, the surgeon proceeded with the surgery based on the received report.*

Written by [Health Desk](#)

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Transporting samples for intraoperative decision-making in remote areas hasn't been extensively explored or documented within the Indian context. (Image Credits: Pixabay)

A tissue sample was transported in the middle of surgery from one hospital to another to check if the tissue was cancerous. The procedure was a part of the trial run by the [Indian Council of Medical Research \(ICMR\)](#) under its i-Drone initiative.

The apex research body is conducting trials to achieve the national mission of expanding the drone ecosystem in the country.

According to a statement by the ICMR, the drone efficiently transported intraoperative surgical biospecimens surgically excised from the patient from Dr TMA Pai Hospital, Karkala to Kasturba Medical College, Manipal Academy of Higher Education Manipal (tertiary care hospital), covering a distance of approximately 37 km in 15-20 minutes, which takes around 50-60 minutes by road.

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Upon arrival, the sample was promptly analysed, and the report was electronically conveyed back to the peripheral hospital. Subsequently, the surgeon proceeded with the surgery based on the received report. The trial run as part of a validation study has been undertaken for the first time in the country by the collaborative efforts of ICMR, Kasturba Medical College (KMC) and Dr TMA PAI Rotary Hospital.

Drones play a crucial role in agriculture, defence, disaster relief and healthcare, especially during emergencies by enabling rapid delivery of vaccines, medications, and vital supplies to remote and inaccessible areas, the statement stated.

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The ICMR along with Kasturba Medical College is currently conducting a feasibility study in Manipal, [Karnataka](#). The study aims to evaluate the potential use of aerial transportation systems (drones), to transport items such as pathology samples from secondary healthcare facilities to tertiary-level hospitals, the statement said.

Transporting samples for intraoperative decision-making in remote areas hasn't been extensively explored or documented within the Indian context due to limited data on feasibility, utility, and cost-effectiveness.

The ongoing research in Manipal aims to address this gap by documenting the procedures for quick transportation of intraoperative samples using drones, the statement said.

This innovative approach could potentially connect secondary care centers with limited resources to tertiary care facilities with advanced diagnostics, facilitating immediate access during surgical procedures.

Ultimately, this initiative could streamline complex surgeries, overcoming geographical barriers and improving access to specialized care in peripheral hospitals, the research body claims.

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The ICMR has been a pioneer in using drones for healthcare purposes and successfully conducted the delivery of medical supplies, vaccines, and medicines in remote areas of Himachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland, blood bag delivery in Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) under its i-DRONE initiative.

Highlighting the significance of the event, Dr Rajiv Bahl, secretary, Department of Health Research (DHR) and Director General, ICMR emphasized that "The 'i-DRONE' initiative was initially utilized during the COVID-19 pandemic by ICMR for distributing vaccines to inaccessible areas. Last year, we successfully conducted trials for delivering blood and blood-related products, which require low-temperature storage.

"Additionally, in another study, we transported medications and diagnostic samples to subzero temperature areas and challenging regions with altitudes exceeding 12,000 feet in Himachal Pradesh. In this ongoing study, our focus extends beyond delivering pathological specimens; we aim to enhance patient compliance and alleviate the burden on tertiary care hospitals. This study holds significant relevance for the Indian context. The utilization of drones for delivering healthcare essentials during emergencies has the potential to save numerous lives. It can serve effectively in challenging geographical terrains, benefiting the Indian population, while also bolstering India's healthcare infrastructure," Dr Atul Goel, Director General of Health Services (DGHS), said.

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