



'UNVEILING THE CONCEPT OF DRY RUN IN CONTEXT OF COVID VACCINE'

Biochemistry

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ABSTRACT

Just like armed forces mock drills, dry run is a dummy process that helps the government in assessing how ready we are for the COVID-19 immunization at the national level. India had approved two COVID-19 vaccines namely, Oxford-AstraZeneca's Covishield manufactured by the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin. The main objective of the dry run for COVID-19 vaccine introduction was to assess operational feasibility in the use of Co-WIN application in the field environment, to test the linkages between planning and implementation and to identify the challenges and guideway forward prior to actual implementation of the immunization drive.

KEYWORDS

dry run, COVID-19 vaccines, Co-WIN.

SHORT COMMUNICATION

Just like armed forces mock drills, dry run is a dummy process that helps the government in assessing how ready we are for the COVID-19 immunization at the national level. It also helps in highlighting any shortcomings in the mechanism laid out for the COVID-19 vaccine drive so that any difficulties or problems can be sorted out timely, during the actual immunization process. India had approved two COVID-19 vaccines namely, Oxford-AstraZeneca's Covishield manufactured by the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.¹

In the process of dry run, the health workers were administered a dummy vaccine at the site. In this way, the administration would be able to spot manageable loopholes in the system prior to the actual vaccination drive. Hence, a dry run would allow testing the mechanism.

In India, a dry run for COVID-19 vaccination was conducted by all States and Union territories (UTs) administrations on 2nd January, 2021² to test the linkages between planning and implementation and to identify the challenges that could be faced in actual COVID-19 immunization at the country level. This activity of dry run was proposed to be conducted in all State capitals in at least three session sites. At each of the three-session sites, the Medical Officer In-charge would identify 25 healthcare workers as test beneficiaries. The states and UTs were asked to ensure that the data of these beneficiaries to be uploaded in Co-WIN³, which is an online platform for monitoring the delivery of COVID-19 vaccine, deployment of team members, and testing recipient. These beneficiaries would also be available at the session site for the dry run. The States and UTs were also asked to prepare the facilities and users to be created on Co-WIN application including uploading the data of Health Care Worker (HCW) beneficiaries. The entire process was done to ensure physical verification of all proposed sites for the adequacy of space, logistical arrangements, internet connectivity, electricity, safety, etc. and prepare at least three model session sites in each state (at state capital) for demonstration. The model sites were designed to have separate entry and exit in a 'three-room set-up' with adequate space outside for awareness generation activities, display all Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials at these sites and ensure that all standard operating procedures (SOPs) and protocols to be practised at the identified sites in an ideal environment along with vaccination teams to be identified and trained in all aspects. It would also equip the state and UT administration in the management of vaccine supply, storage and logistics including cold chain management. The vaccine administrators played an important role in the vaccination process, training of trainers and those who would administer the vaccine had also been taken up across various states.

Around 96,000 vaccinators were trained for this purpose. A total of 2,360 participants were trained in the National Training of Trainers and over 57,000 participants were trained in district-level training in 719 districts. States augmented the state helpline 104 (used in addition to 1075) for any vaccine or software-related query. The prime concerns of dry run were the management of any possible adverse events following immunisation (AEFI), adherence and management of infection control practices at the session site and prevention of disease transmission.

Some States also included districts situated in remote areas with poor logistical support, while two States namely, Maharashtra and Kerala scheduled the dry run in major cities other than their capitals as per guidelines of the Union Health Ministry.

The main objective of the dry run for COVID-19 vaccine introduction was to assess operational feasibility in the use of Co-WIN application in the field environment, to test the linkages between planning and implementation and to identify the challenges and guideway forward prior to actual implementation of the immunization drive. This was also expected to boost up morale and give confidence to the programme managers at various levels. The entire focus of practising dry run was to ensure effective preparedness for the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out. It also included mock drills of session sites, testing of beneficiaries, checking cold storage, transportation arrangements handling crowd at the immunization site, and ensuring physical distancing.

All in all, the dry run was a practice exercise conducted to find the best way to administer the vaccine to people and identify the loopholes in logistics and training.

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