

Scientists a step closer to male contraceptive vaccine

A team of scientists here, which is conducting research to develop a male contraceptive, has identified and tested on animals a protein that can temporarily suppress male fertility.

A. Bandivdekar, research team head and assistant director of the National Institute for Research in Reproductive Health (NIRRH), told IANS that the research studies and experiments have been carried out with the aim of producing a vaccine which could serve as an option to condoms to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

The findings of the research team have been published in a medical journal 'Vaccine', he said here Friday.

The initial research was conducted on rats, followed by rabbits, marmoset (small monkeys) and now bonnets (large monkeys).

'It is difficult to give a specific time-frame when it will be ready for actual marketing as a vaccine. The vaccine-candidate currently undergoing tests on animals, after which it will be ready for pre-clinical toxicology trials only after another year or so,' he explained.

These will be followed by stringent human trials.

He said that the molecule identified by the NIRRH team is 'sperm-specific', and would result in temporary infertility without interfering with other body proteins.

Bandivdekar, (54), said that an unwanted pregnancy is a major issue of public health and population control worldwide.

The existing options in male contraception include condoms, withdrawal method and vasectomy. While condoms and withdrawal are not found acceptable and have high failure rates, vasectomy, though most effective, is a permanent procedure with less chance of reversal, he pointed out.

The need of the hour is to discover a new contraceptive method, which is safe, effective, affordable and simultaneously, rapidly reversible without problems, he said.

Bandivdekar said that research in this field have also been carried out by Anil Suri at the National Institute of Immunology (NII), [New Delhi](#) and a two-member team led by P. Primakoff in the US.

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