

Scientist wants change in perception of bird flu

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Hyderabad: Even as the threat of avian influenza looms over developing countries like India, former director of the US National Cancer Institute Richard Klausner wants the scientific community to change its perception about the dreaded virus.

Despite various influenza taking a heavy toll of people in different parts of the world, flu as a whole has been an 'orphaned' disease as far as research is concerned. The Governments are, however, waking up to the fact that problems such as bio terrorism, SARS, HIV and the latest bird flu, are real and of global magnitude, Dr. Klausner, former executive director of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, said.

Dearth of drugs

The scientist said there was a dearth of drugs and vaccines to counter the flu threat emerging time and again and the scientific community should look into the entire gamut of flu viruses to prepare vaccines. Speaking to The Hindu, Dr. Klausner who was here on Monday expressed concern that a majority of the countries were 'very poorly' prepared to counter avian flu despite the periodicity with which the pandemic had been occurring. "If not the intensity, see the way pandemics are occurring across the world. It is certain that there will be an attack and I can only hope that the next bout of pandemic is many years away," he said.

The Governments should respond to the challenge by evolving a good system of detection of whether the bird flu was affecting humans and then have a mechanism to isolate the infected birds. On the other hand there was a need for fast track approach for positioning sufficient vaccine when the pandemic happens, he said.