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News: West Nile fever

- The detection of West Nile fever in 3 Kerala districts has prompted health authorities to issue alerts and intensify preventive measures.

West Nile Virus (WNV)

- West Nile Virus (WNV) is a **member of the flavivirus** genus and belongs to the Japanese encephalitis antigenic complex of the family Flaviviridae.
- WNV is commonly found in **Africa, Europe, the Middle East, North America and West Asia.**
- **Older people, children and those with weakened immune systems are most at risk.**
- WNV was first isolated in a woman in the West Nile district of Uganda in 1937.
- It was identified in birds in the Nile delta region in 1953. Before 1997, WNV was not considered pathogenic for birds.
- **Human infections attributable to WNV have been reported in many countries for over 50 years.**

- WNV is an **infectious disease spread by infected mosquitoes**. It spreads from birds to humans with the bite of an **infected Culex mosquito**. It can lead to a **fatal neurological disease** in humans.
- The **virus may also be transmitted through contact with other infected animals, their blood, or other tissues**.
- **Rare cases of transmission through organ transplant, blood transfusions, and transplacental transmission**.
- **No human-to-human transmission** of WNV through casual contact has been **documented**.
- The **virus causes West Nile fever in around 20% of cases**, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).
- It is **related to the Zika, Dengue and Yellow Fever Viruses**.

Symptoms

- Those **infected usually have no symptoms or mild symptoms**.
- The symptoms include a **fever, headache, body aches, skin rash, and swollen lymph glands**. They can last a few days to several weeks, and usually go away on their own.

- If **West Nile virus enters the brain, it can be life-threatening**. It may cause inflammation of the brain, called encephalitis, or inflammation of the tissue that surrounds the brain and spinal cord, called meningitis.

Treatment

- There are **no specific vaccines or treatments for human WNV disease**.
- The best way to avoid WNV is to prevent mosquito bites.
- Treatment is supportive for patients with neuro-invasive West Nile virus, often involving hospitalization, intravenous fluids, respiratory support, and prevention of secondary infections.