

# Report on WHO SEAR UNITY-Household Transmission Investigation (HHTI) Site Investigator Training

Department of Community Medicine,  
Hamdard Institute of Medical Sciences & Research (HIMSR), New Delhi

**Date:** 27 August 2026

**Mode:** Online

## Background:

**The Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)**, established by WHO in 1952, provides a global mechanism for influenza surveillance, preparedness and response. Within this broader framework, **WHO UNITY Studies** provide standardized protocols for investigating respiratory pathogens for generating evidence on transmission, clinical characteristics, severity and risk factors.

During the **interpandemic period**, the protocol provides an opportunity to generate evidence on respiratory virus transmission in households while **strengthening site capacity, testing study procedures and addressing operational challenges** for timely investigation during future outbreaks and pandemics.

**The Household Transmission Investigation (HHTI)** is a UNITY protocol designed to assess respiratory pathogen transmission within households through systematic follow-up of household contacts, including symptomatic and asymptomatic infections.

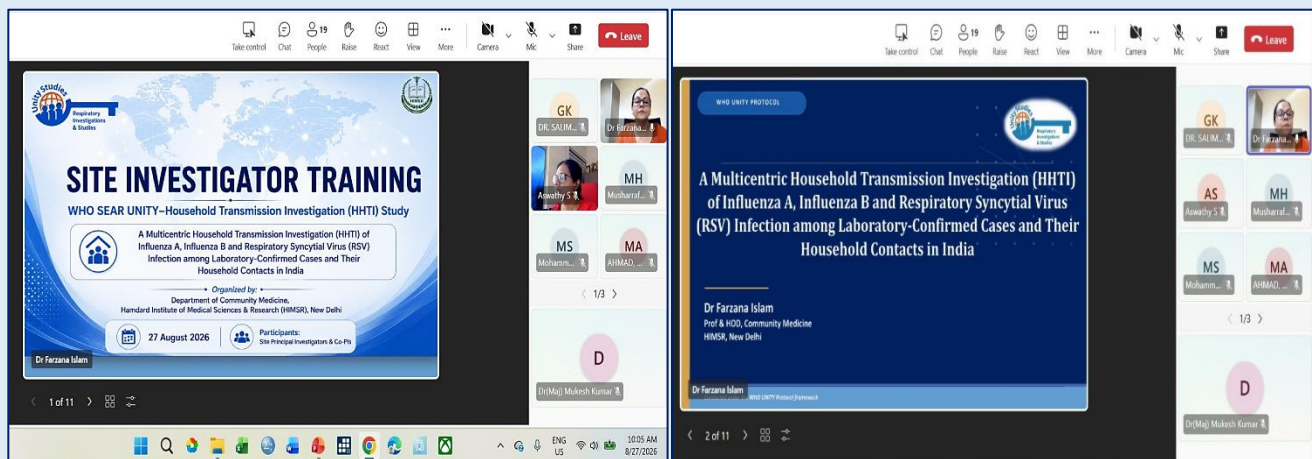
**The 2026 HHTI Study**, titled *“A Multicentric Household Transmission Investigation (HHTI) of Influenza A, Influenza B and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Infection among Laboratory-Confirmed Cases and Their Household Contacts in India,”* will be conducted by **Hamdard Institute of Medical Sciences & Research (HIMSR), New Delhi**, in collaboration with four participating institutions across different geographical regions of India. HIMSR will serve as the Nodal/Coordinating Centre. The study will focus on Influenza A, Influenza B and RSV during the interpandemic period, while strengthening the capacity of participating institutions to conduct standardized respiratory pathogen investigations.

## Participating Institutions

The multicentric study involves the following five institutions:

1. **Hamdard Institute of Medical Sciences & Research (HIMSR), New Delhi** – Nodal/Coordinating Centre
2. **Government Medical College, Srinagar**
3. **Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Aligarh**
4. **Amrita School of Medicine, Kochi**
5. **Malla Reddy Institute of Medical Sciences (MRIMS), Hyderabad**

## Site Investigator Training:



A one-day **Site Investigator Training** for the WHO SEAR UNITY–HHTI Study was conducted on **27 August 2026**.

The training was organized by the Department of Community Medicine, HIMSR, with the objective of orienting investigators and study teams to the study protocol and ensuring a common understanding of the procedures before initiation of field activities. The programme brought together representatives from **WHO India, HIMSR and all four participating institutions**.

### Key attendees included:

- **Dr. Mohammad Ahmad**, WHO India
- **Prof. Musharraf Husain**, Dean, HIMSR
- **Dr. Farzana Islam**, Principal Investigator/Nodal Investigator, HIMSR
- **Dr. Salim Khan**, Professor, Government Medical College, Srinagar
- **Dr. Salman Shah**, Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Aligarh
- **Dr. Aswathy S.**, Professor & Head, Department of Community Medicine, Amrita School of Medicine, Kochi
- **Dr. K. Sushma Narsing**, Professor & Head, Department of Community Medicine, Malla Reddy Institute of Medical Sciences, Hyderabad
- **Co-Investigators and study team members** from HIMSR and all participating institutions



## Objectives of the Training

The training was organized with the following objectives:

- To establish a common understanding of the WHO-UNITY framework and the HHTI protocol among all participating sites.
- To onboard the **newly participating sites** and establish their understanding of the HHTI study procedures and requirements for implementation
- To orient participating investigators to the **study objectives, design and methodology**.
- To familiarize site teams with procedures for **identification and enrolment of index cases and household contacts**.
- To clarify the procedures for **household contact follow-up and symptom monitoring**.
- To discuss **laboratory investigations, specimen collection and follow-up testing**.
- To familiarize teams with the **study forms, data collection and documentation requirements**.
- To clarify the **roles and responsibilities of the Nodal/Coordinating Centre and participating sites**.
- To identify potential operational challenges and ensure readiness for study implementation.

## Training Proceedings

The training provided an overview of the **WHO UNITY initiative and the HHTI protocol**, followed by detailed discussions on the key components of study implementation, including:

- Study objectives, design and methodology
- Eligibility and enrolment of index cases
- Identification and follow-up of household contacts
- Laboratory investigations and specimen collection
- Symptom monitoring and follow-up
- Data collection and study documentation
- Roles and responsibilities of participating sites

The sessions also focused on the practical aspects of implementing the adapted HHTI protocol and provided an opportunity for investigators and study teams to clarify protocol-related and operational queries.

The training was completed successfully with **active participation and constructive discussions from all participating sites**. It helped establish a common understanding of the study protocol, implementation procedures and responsibilities of the participating teams.

Following the training, the sites will proceed with **site readiness activities, completion of required institutional and ethical approvals, preparation of study teams and materials, and other pre-implementation activities**.

The study will subsequently move into its planned **two-month active implementation phase**, with the aim of generating valuable epidemiological evidence on household transmission of **Influenza A, Influenza B and RSV**, while strengthening capacity for respiratory pathogen investigations during the interpandemic period.

## Way Forward

Following completion of the training, all participating sites will proceed with the required **site readiness and pre-implementation activities**. These will include preparation of study teams and materials, completion of applicable institutional and ethical requirements, establishment of site-level processes for recruitment and follow-up, and preparation for standardized data and laboratory documentation.

The study is planned for the period **1 September to 31 December 2026**, with an **active implementation phase of two months**. The experience gained during implementation will also help assess the **feasibility, operational requirements and challenges of conducting standardized household transmission investigations across diverse healthcare settings in India**.