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## Concerns Over Use of BCG Vaccine: WHO

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### Why in News

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The **World Health Organization** (WHO) has highlighted a few critical issues over the use of **BCG vaccine** for **Covid-19**.

BCG, or bacille Calmette-Guerin, is a vaccine for **tuberculosis (TB) disease**.

### Key Points

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- WHO emphasizes the importance of **randomised controlled trials** of the vaccine to understand its safety and efficacy before using it on healthcare workers.
  - Randomised controlled trials using BCG vaccine are **under way in the Netherlands and Australia** to find out whether the vaccine can reduce the incidence and severity of Covid-19.
- **According to an earlier study**, there is an association between countries that have a universal BCG vaccination and reduced coronavirus cases.
  - It **argues** that countries that have **deployed the BCG vaccine in their immunisation programmes have seen fewer deaths from Covid-19**.
  - The BCG vaccine **enhances the innate immune response** to subsequent infections which might reduce viral load after Covid-19 exposure, with a consequent less severe Covid-19 and more rapid recovery.
- **Views in India:**
  - According to the **Translational Health Science and Technology Institute** (THSTI), Faridabad, the vaccine can prevent intracellular infections, so its protective effects against Covid-19 is a **biologically plausible hypothesis**.
  - It will be premature for India, that has had a consistent TB vaccination policy since 1968, to take comfort from the study.

- **Five reasons** countries should wait for the results of the BCG vaccine randomised controlled trials:
  - The **association** of fewer Covid-19 cases in countries that have a universal BCG vaccination programme is **based on population** rather than individual data.
  - The benefits of the BCG vaccine given at birth are **unlikely to reduce the severity of Covid-19 decades later**.

The beneficial effects of the BCG vaccine **might be altered by subsequent administration of a different vaccine** and become less effective after longer periods.
  - There is a **remote possibility** that the BCG vaccine **ramps up the immune system leading to worsening** of Covid-19 in a small population of patients with a severe disease.

**Coronavirus** induces **cytokine storm** in some patients, leading to further complications and even death.
  - If BCG vaccination is not effective against the **novel coronavirus**, it is likely to give a **false sense of security to people**, especially during the **pandemic**.
  - Using the vaccine without evidence of its benefits could further **jeopardise the already short supply of the BCG vaccine**.

Source: TH