

Dr Dilip Mahalanabis

October 19, 2022

In news— Pioneer of Oral Rehydration Solution(ORS) therapy, Dr Dilip Mahalanabis has passed away recently.

A brief note on him-

- Born on November 12, 1934 in West Bengal, Dr Mahalanabis studied in Kolkata and London, and joined the Johns Hopkins University International Centre for Medical Research and Training in Kolkata in the 1960s, where he carried out research in oral rehydration therapy.
- When the 1971 war broke out, millions of people from then East Pakistan took refuge in India.
- Dr Mahalanabis was working in overflowing refugee camps during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation war when he came up with ORS, which The Lancet called “the most important medical discovery of the 20th century.”
- From his research, Dr Mahalanabis knew that a solution of sugar and salt, which would increase water absorption by the body, could save lives.
- He and his team then prepared solutions of salt and glucose in water and began storing them in large drums, from where patients or their relatives could help themselves.
- From 1975 to 1979, Dr Mahalanabis worked in cholera control for WHO in Afghanistan, Egypt and Yemen. During the 1980s, he worked as a WHO consultant on research on the management of bacterial diseases.
- In 2002, Dr Dilip Mahalanabis along with Dr Nathaniel F Pierce was awarded the Pollin Prize by Columbia University (considered the equivalent of Nobel in pediatrics).

Oral Rehydration Solution(ORS)-

- ORS is a simple, effective remedy for dehydration & is

known around the world.

- According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), diarrhoeal diseases, such as cholera, are among the leading causes of mortality in infants and young children in many developing countries, where the patient dies of dehydration.
- ORS, a combination of water, glucose and salts, is a simple and cost-effective method of preventing this.
- One of the advantages with ORS is that even untrained people can administer it and keep the crisis in check till the patient is admitted to the hospital.
- It contains electrolytes in right proportions and is given to babies and adults suffering from diarrhoea.
- While initially, the medical fraternity was septical, the WHO eventually adopted ORS as the standard method for treating cholera and other diarrhoeal diseases.
- Today, the WHO recommends a combination of sodium chloride, anhydrous glucose, potassium chloride and Trisodium citrate dihydrate as the ORS formula.
- In India, July 29 is observed as ORS Day.