All India Democratic Women’s Association
23, V.B.P. House, Rafi Marg, New Delhi-110001

To
The Director General,
Indian Council for Medical Research,
New Delhi

Dear Dr. Aggarwal,

We are writing to you as head of the institution which has permitted the violation of minimum human standards in the name of medical research. One of the
ICMR institutes, the Institute for Cytology and Preventive Oncology in the
Maulana Azad College used poor women as guinea pigs in a research project on
cervical cancer. In several cases the lesions developed into cancer and many women
have died. This is the most direct and horrifying example of how little value the lives
of poor women have to Institutes like yours. There is prima facie evidence of
criminal callousness leading to fatal results. But has even a single responsible person
been punished? Have you even bothered to contact the women concerned? Why
have you not given compensation to the women affected or in the case of death to
their families? After the exposure of the project, it is reported that an enquiry
committee was set up. However it is yet to begin its work. Mr. Director General,

Moreover the reality is that this is not the only example. We, along with many
other concerned citizens and women’s groups have objected to the callous attitude
and approach of the ICMR on the important question of clinical trials of harmful
hormonal contraceptives on women. Thousands of women, for example who were
adverse impact there may have been on their health. In spite of objections you
condemn and protest against your approach in research. It is unethical, it is inhuman
and it amounts to murder. We also object to the secrecy with which you sanction
projects of research and conduct trials. There should be total transparency.
We have heard about an ethics committee which is functioning. We demand that
you take the initiative to call concerned women’s organisations on the issue of
unethical methods of using poor women in your studies.

In the project concerning cervical cancer we demand punishment for those
responsible, compensation for those affected.

We hope you will treat this matter with the urgency required.

Thanking you,

Yours Sincerely,

Brinda Karat Premila Pandhe Kaliindi deshpande Ashalata