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Foster PPP to percolate benefits of affordable healthcare to the masses

To achieve universal health coverage by 2030 bring in a multi-sectorial plan for next few years

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With a population of 1.4 billion we are the third largest economy spending Rs 6 trillion on healthcare. Despite this huge spending India's challenges are immense and there is still a need to address communicable diseases and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) affecting a greater mass especially in the semi-urban and rural areas.

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Even though India declared itself to be polio and tetanus free (in 2014 & 2015), much needs to be done in the [healthcare](#) sector. Women and child mortality is still rampant requiring quick action. A current study indicates that 44,000 women die every year due to pregnancy complications and a child dies (under age of 5 years) of pneumonia and diarrhea every two minutes.

The greatest bane is the unorganised nature of our health sector. If the government aims to achieve as planned the universal health coverage by 2030, it will bring in the much needed transformation in the [healthcare](#) sector with a multi-sectorial plan for next few years starting with [Budget](#) 2017.

Government health expenditure

The [budget](#) for health expenditure has to be equivalent to other developing nation's i.e. 3-4percent of the GDP (Gross domestic product) with focus not only on treatment of diseases but also on prevention, designing and supervising the system. Improvement of infrastructure, adopting new technologies, buying new medical equipment, aiding research and health IT systems will fall in line with increasing spends leading to improved care.

Transform medical education system

The educational institutions need to reinvent themselves by changing curriculum with the current technology and R&D going on. This will accelerate the adoption of newer technologies with supply of good talent. Programmes for skill training, industry internship and scholarships will be of great importance in this regard. For example, current trends in genetics, biopharma, and bioinformatics should be part of the curriculum so that the awareness levels about its effectiveness is known to clinical community and the same can be reaped by the patients.

Ease cost for technology transfer



Surajit Chakrabartty, CFO, Medgenome

Most medical equipment, research and technology is developed in West hence the cost of using locally is marginally high which the market is underprepared and customers unaccepting. Hence, there lies a need to develop mechanism to ease the transfer, by providing subsidies, easing the taxes and regulations.

Insurance

With the growing burden of diseases there is a need for extending the insurance cover even to genetic,

inherited, rare and highly prevalent diseases. Currently, the cover for health insurance is not even 5 percent of the total health expenditure.

Indian specific clinical, genetic and lifestyle data

We have 4000 population groups in India with heavy burden of inherited and lifestyle diseases demanding a Genome Wide Association Studies (GWAS) that will have a huge impact on thehealthcare dynamics. GWAS can provide new insights into the diseases that can help in prevention & management of major diseases such as CVDs and Diabetes. Government should support programmes for such population studies and aid development of drugs addressing such areas of need.

Foster public-private partnership

To make sure benefits of affordable health care percolates to the masses, government needs to be a facilitator to the private sector. It's like a symbiotic relationship where private sector aids in reaching maximum people while public sector relaxes the norms and allows it to grow. Example: To tackle birth defects and genetic disorders there needs to be increased awareness on genetic testing and counselling services where government will create that awareness while private firms will provide treatment and management solutions. Further, this can also mean government can tie up with international firms to provide them a market and enable us with the latest technology for treatment/management.

An investment in advanced genetic technologies for understanding and targeting specific diseases will lead to a different approach to individual's health. Many inherited and genetic diseases can be known even before birth (through Non-Invasive pre-natal test) which enables parents to make informed decision. Similarly, for other diseases to know the exact cause of the disease, there are various genetic tests which will help in management and treatment of diseases. Such advance tests should be made accessible for all by the government through special initiatives.

Proper regulation

Proper norms need to be laid out in consultation with experts for different health segments like pharma, biotech, genomics, diagnostic, hospital etc in line with developed countries for a better regulation and control.

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