



## News Of The Month

### National Health Policy 2017: A step towards improved health indicators

The Union Cabinet recently cleared the new National Health Policy. The new policy comes after the last one in 2002. This policy too has gone through a 2 year long deliberation among experts and has suggestions and inputs from all stakeholders. The policy aims to introduce institutional reforms and also improve the quality of services in various aspects.

Along with other promises in the new policy, one of the most talked about claims made in the current policy is the increased health spending to 2.5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to a vis-à-vis 2 per cent target which was adopted back in 2002. According to public health advocates government was not able to achieve the 2002 target but nevertheless this is a welcome move to start with. What remains to be seen is how states will increase the health expenditure and serve the needs of the citizens.



With stunted malnourished children, anaemic women, India's current expenditure is abysmally lower than many of its neighbors as

well as the BRICS counterparts. A major cause of concern is the increasing out of pocket expenditure.

The new National Health Policy also aims to strengthen the primary health care proposing free drugs, free diagnostics and essential services in all public hospitals which would auger well for the health indicators to improve in a big way. This would be ensured by support to secondary and tertiary spectrum with focus on preventive, promoting and curative services.

### **Out Of Pocket expenses (OOP) increase the poverty divide**

India's out of pocket expenses on health is highest in the world with India accounting for 20 per cent of the global burden of disease, high death of children under the age of 5 as well as neo natal deaths. The correlation between national OOP expenditure and poverty was also emphasised in the draft of the National Health Policy which was placed in the public domain for consideration. With negligible insurance cover, increasing number of smoking related deaths, the worst sufferers identified were the people in rural India. The states need to identify innovative ways how to decrease this pressure specially a way to cover the informal and unorganized sector workers and their dependents.

### **Holistic wellness approach**

The new National Health Policy has a very strong focus on improving the holistic picture of health by considering the impact on physical, mental and emotional well-being of all the citizens. With this policy, India is moving towards realising health care as a Right in the future with a paradigm shift from sickness to wellness. This should change the narrative of health development in India now.

However with these changes, there are other challenges too which seek an immediate attention. How can India successfully replicate the health pilots and schemes that are being introduced across the spectrum and connect these with other flagship health schemes? How to cut the duplication between schemes, correlate and interlink them? Besides there is also an urgent need in leveraging health programme partnerships to the last mile specially to reach those people who are out of the domain of national health programmes.

## News Round Up

### **'Let's talk about depression', urges PM Narendra Modi**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi chose an unusual (for him) subject to address during his 'Mann ki Baat' - depression. That is, depression of the mental kind, not a depression in the rupee or in manufacturing or in productivity.... [Click here](#)

### **'Let's Talk', WHO says, as depression rates rise 18% in a decade**

Depression is now the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Thursday, with more than 300 million people suffering.... [Click here](#)

### **IMA asks WHO to change 'health' definition to include 'spiritual well being'**

Lucknow chapter of the Indian medical Association (IMA) on Wednesday wrote to the World health Organization (WHO) asking for addition of the words 'spiritual well being' in the official definition of 'health'....[Click here](#)



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