

Present Healthcare Scenario



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The Indian healthcare is growing at a rapid pace. As per reports, the growth rate is expected at an approximate CAGR of 23 percent for the period 2015–2020 to the tune of USD 280 billion. This gives enough advantage to India as compared to other global markets as we are one of the best destinations for medical value travels. The healthcare spending in world's major regions is also set to increase from 2.4 percent to 7.5 percent, for the period 2015–2020. Various factors, viz., standardized clinical practices, increased generic drug use, strategic procurement and tie ups, etc., are going to impact the healthcare industry in a big way. Importantly, India is a hub for alternative medicine (AYUSH), and we must emphasize on integrated medicine which will showcase India as an ideal market for healthcare seekers, where all streams complement one another to give complete care.

On budgetary allocation in healthcare

Government spending of 1.04 percent of GDP on public health is not enough and is becoming a limitation for the common masses to have access to healthcare. When compared to global healthcare market, India's healthcare spending including public and private healthcare providers is way behind as compared to the global average of 10.1 percent.

On planned budgetary allocation for 2016-17 fiscal

Bhaktivedanta Hospital & Research Institute is in the process of constructing a new healthcare facility adjacent to the existing one. In the new one, approximately 50 percent will be the investment in medical equipment and devices.

On vision for health and family welfare

India has the largest youth power in the world. If we want to maintain overall progress of India as a nation, a holistic approach based on physical, mental, and spiritual health is much warranted. More energy needs to be pumped in emphasizing preventive healthcare.

Technological advancement and digitization can play a big role in reducing the gap of healthcare service reach to the poor. Accessibility of medical services in remote areas of India is a big challenge, and hence a thrust for better infrastructure facilities like transport, basic facilities like sanitation, education, and nutrition will help to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates.

India should utilize the skills of non-allopathic doctors particularly in rural and needy areas. They have to be trained in BLS/ACLS and emergency management with proper certification, to enable them to practice emergency medicine in rural and under-privileged areas. However, such professionals need to undergo mandatory upgradation of skills every year in order to maintain the certificate of practice.

These suggestions are based on the challenges we faced at Bhaktivedanta Hospital during our outreach activities in the tribal areas of Thane and Palghar districts.

On monitoring the quality of private healthcare

Around 70 percent of India's population lives in rural areas, whereas most of the private hospitals are clustered in urban areas and mostly cater to the elite segment. Such private hospitals are unreachable to the poor and middle-class segment of the society.

Since the primary motive of private healthcare brands is profitability, the business aspect of the healthcare institutes may supersede the health concern of patients, leading to a global challenge of *trust deficit* between doctors and patients.

To address the challenge of *trust deficit*, few initiatives by the private healthcare sector, I suggest the following:

- Open facilities in the interior parts of India.
- Offer quality healthcare at affordable rates.
- Plan strategies, such as one paid patient supports one needy patient.

- Offer government insurance facility to the needy.
- Use of telemedicine for rural section.
- Private healthcare providers as a part of corporate social responsibility (CSR) – compulsorily must have an outreach section with annual targets of service delivery.

On public-private partnership

In India, the public healthcare systems are not enough to cater to the entire population owing to which the sector is dependent on private participation. Public-private-partnership is a very ideal model since all the parties included are its stakeholders.

To meet the growing demand of urban elite population and their needs, there is a requirement of facilities with high quality and the top brands are facilitating those needs. Government should play the role of providing proper infrastructure facilities, and private players can provide advanced medical facilities and this combination will definitely help the masses.

Also the government of India has pioneered CSR through which corporates can earmark an assured sum toward healthcare facilities.

Bhaktivedanta Hospital & Research Institute has been successful in mobilizing people participation, donors' support toward infrastructure, and providing human resource for operationalizing PPP model.

On areas where government should invest

- Government should prioritize in spending for public health.
- Government should offer land and incentives for opening hospital facilities in rural and tribal areas.
- Although there are PHCs in rural and tribal areas, still there is a lack of expert doctors, para-medical staff, adequate stock of medicines, and state-of-the-art equipment.
- For more resources to translate into better services, the monitoring of public healthcare services needs to improve, and local bodies like *panchayats* need to be included in monitoring.
- Better awareness of wellness, preventive care, and diagnosis.

- Invest in skill development as the doctor-to-patient ratio is very low.
- Use the available skilled manpower and train them in various medical fields to utilize their services at district/*taluka* level.
- Healthcare professionals need to be trained for soft skills like empathy, communication, etc.

On healthcare policy

India is divided into haves and have-nots. There is a peculiar requirement at every stage. However, the government intervention is mandatory to monitor the smooth functioning of healthcare facilities. In such situations, the healthcare sector should incorporate:

- Focus on preventive health
- Indigenous resource funding – which will focus on traditional methods along with modern technology. Ayurveda, naturopathy, and other alternative therapies to be combined with allopathy for better patient care
- Use of nano-technology
- Improved infrastructure in rural India
- Intensive training of community-based health workers, the involvement of traditional leaders, and local delivery of services
- Treatment at the level of body, mind, and soul

Bhaktivedanta Hospital & Research Institute is a project of Sri Chaitanya Seva Trust. The hospital is located at Mira Road, Thane District, and is NABH-accredited. It serves a population of 5.6 million. The focus of the hospital is not only to provide medical service at the level of body but also at the level of mind and soul. The hospital is also engaged in research and development. The hospital has successfully implemented three PPP models at Hamrapur, Ambiste, and Vikramgad in Wada Taluka, Palghar district. It works toward self-sustainability. The hospital's services have been recognized at various forums and they have been recipient of many awards such as Ethical Organization in Healthcare Services, award for PPP Healthcare Model, Sach Bharat Samman Award for Ethics, Transparency, and Spirituality at work, etc. to name a few. ■

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