

Editorial

Ayushman Bharat Initiative: India's Answer to Provide Universal Health Care

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Editorial

India, the sixth largest economy and largest democracy of the world has been improving its health-care facilities slowly since last few decades. Doubling the life expectancy from 31 years in 1947^[1] when India got its independence from the British rule to 68.3 years in 2017,^[2] the Indian government has been doing a good job; however, it is still quite less as compared to the western world.

Furthermore, the per person burden of the disease, measured as disability-adjusted life year rate, has substantially dropped by 36% from 1990 to 2016. Following western world's trend in terms of disease burden, non-communicable diseases (ischemic heart disease being the number one culprit, followed by chronic pulmonary obstructive disease) and injuries together have surpassed the infectious and childhood diseases.^[3] The number of diabetics has increased to 65 million in 2016 from 26 million in 1990^[4] while the prevalence rate of patients suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease has rose to 55 million (2016) from 28 million (1990).^[5] The incidence of all cancers also rose by 28% between 1990 and 2016 (majority of the cases were associated with tobacco smoking).^[6] India also accounts for nearly 1/3rd of total global suicidal rates (37% among women and 24% among men) majority of them being in 15–39-year-old group.^[7] However, tuberculosis, iron-deficiency anemia, lower respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases, and neonatal disorders still persist to be major public health hurdles in many parts of the country.^[3]

In terms of health-care access and quality (HAQ), India still stands at 145th position (among

195 countries) lagging way behind than most of the countries including its neighbor Bangladesh which stands at 133rd position.^[8] The major key role playing factor in HAQ rankings is the Universal Health Care Programme and health schemes which are initiated and ran by the government. India, though have few health-related schemes in order to improve the access to the health care for majority of its public, is still yet not efficient enough as it can be observed by the rankings. However, recently, the Modi-led Indian government has understood the sheer need and importance of bolstering the health of its citizens and to provide universal health care.

“Ayushman Bharat Initiative” also known as Modicare or Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana launched on February 1, 2018, by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi comprised two schemes: (a) Developing 1.5 lakhs (0.15 million or 150,000) health and wellness centers across the country to provide universal health-care coverage and (b) National Health Protection Scheme which should cover over 10 crores poor families (approximate 50 crores or 500 million of beneficiaries) providing up to 5 lakhs rupees per annum per family for secondary and tertiary hospitalization, making it the world's largest state-funded health program.^[9]

This masterstroke initiative should improve the access to quality health services and help fulfilling Modi's stated goal to build a new India by 2022^[9] supplementing its economic progress.

Thank you, Hon'ble Prime Minister Mr. Modi, for providing Indians what they truly deserve: A possibility of good health!

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