

Guest Editorial

Universal Health Coverage: Key To 'Well India'

Universal health coverage is an extremely futuristic vision encompassing the basic pillars of affordability, accessibility and with the primary thrust on the equitable distribution of resources across all strata of society. The goal of universal health coverage is to ensure that all people obtain the health services they need without suffering financial hardship when paying for them. This requires a strong, efficient, well-run health system; a system for financing health services; access to essential medicines and technologies; ability to train and retain the manpower and motivate them with attainable objectives and awards thereon.



In our country Health is responsibility both of Central and state government. It is the obligation of the state to provide free and universal access to quality health-care services to its citizens. World Health Assembly in Geneva identified universal health coverage (UHC) as the key imperative for all countries to consolidate the public health advances. Accordingly, Planning Commission of India constituted a high level expert group (HLEG) on UHC in October 2010. HLEG submitted its report in Nov 2011 to Planning Commission on UHC for India by 2022. The recommendations for the provision of UHC pertain to the critical areas such as health financing, health infrastructure, health services norms, skilled human resources, access to medicines and vaccines, management and institutional reforms, and community participation.

The challenge which our healthcare ecosystem faces are of inaccessibility and inequitable distribution of resources, Rural healthcare, non-availability of adequate skilled human resource, public health mostly out of pocket expenses, lack of inter-sectoral co-ordination and various political pull and push of different forces, and interests. Also, the inadequacy of organized primary health services compromises the health outcome. While corporate hospitals do present a face of latest and quality healthcare to its clientele but their role in elevating the health status of common mass is still minimal. India's current GDP is estimated at \$2.25 trillion by the World Bank. Consequently, the cost of rolling out UHC is actually only 0.28% of India's GDP and well within the country's public health expenditure.

The Government of India has formulated the National Health Policy 2017. The Health Ministry has formulated the National Health Policy 2017, after a gap of 14 years, to address the current and emerging challenges necessitated by the changing socio-economic and epidemiological landscapes since the last National Health Policy was framed in 2002. The policy informs and prioritizes the role of the Government in shaping health systems in all its dimensions- investment in health, organization and financing of healthcare services, prevention of diseases and promotion of good health through cross-sectoral action, access to technologies, developing human resources, encouraging medical pluralism, building the knowledge base required for better health, financial protection strategies and regulation and progressive assurance for health. The policy is definitely focussed on Patients and also has deliverables. It also seeks to ensure improved access and affordability of quality secondary and tertiary care services through a combination of public hospitals and strategic purchasing in healthcare deficit areas from accredited non-governmental healthcare providers, achieve significant reduction in out of pocket expenditure due to healthcare costs, reinforce trust in public healthcare system and influence operation and growth of private healthcare industry as well as medical technologies in alignment with public health goals.

The Ministry of Health and family welfare has gainfully utilised the Technology arena and has made progress in the field of Telemedicine and Telehealth. The various mobile apps launched so far to harness the wide penetration of mobile connectivity (~ 1 billion connections), various mobile apps have been launched so far; namely :

- **Vaccine Tracker (Indradhanush Immunization):** support parents in tracking immunization status of their children and helps them in ensuring complete and timely vaccination.
- **India Fights Dengue:** Enables a user to check Dengue Symptoms, get nearest Hospital / Blood bank information and also share feedback on the disease.
- **NHP Swasth Bharat:** Provides information dissemination on Disease, Lifestyle, First Aid
- **NHP Directory Services Mobile App:** Provides information related to Hospitals across India
- **No More Tension Mobile App:** Provides Information on stress management related aspects and is extremely beneficial in today's stressful environment.

- **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan Mobile App:** For reporting pregnancy care related information from across states
- **Mera Aspataal Mobile App:** It is an initiative to capture patient feedback for the services received at the hospital through user-friendly multiple channels such as Short Message Service (SMS), Outbound Dialling (OBD) mobile application and web portal.
- **Mother and Child Tracking System (MCTS) / Reproductive Child Health (RCH) application.** It is an individual-based tracking system implemented across all the States & UTs to facilitate timely delivery of antenatal and postnatal care services and immunization to children with an objective of improving IMR, MMR, & morbidity.
- **Kilkari:** Kilkari” aims to create awareness among pregnant women, parents and health workers on the importance of ante and post natal care, institutional delivery and immunisation.
- **TB Patient Monitoring System “Nikshay”:** For tracking of individuals for treatment-adherence has been implemented across all States for monitoring of TB patients.
- **Tobacco Cessation Programme:** It is a mobile-based interventional initiative for counselling and helping people to quit tobacco. Currently over 20 lakhs total missed calls have been captured and around 15 lakhs users are registered for this program.
- **mDiabetes Program:** It is a mobile-based initiative for prevention and care of diabetes which has more than 1 lakh users are registered for mDiabetes
- **ANM on Line (ANMOL):** A tablet based application for Integrated RCH Register which allows ANMs to enter and update data for beneficiaries of their jurisdiction has been piloted in the State of Andhra Pradesh and currently around 15,000 ANMs are working on ANMOL in Andhra Pradesh and pilot districts of MP & Telangana
- **Drugs and Vaccines Distribution Management System (DVDMS) (‘e Aushidhi’):** It deals with purchase, inventory management and distribution of various drugs, sutures and surgical items to various District Drug Warehouses of State / UT, District Hospitals (DH), their sub stores at CHC, PHC etc, by automating the workflow of procurement, supply chain, quality control and finance department in State/UT level.
- **m Rakt Kosh:** This app allows nationwide search of blood banks. Details of blood bank are displayed based on user’s current location in ascending order of distance. Users can also search for blood banks by selecting particular State/District. Through this app users can call or send an email to the selected blood bank, and can get navigation directions, distance to any selected blood bank.
- **Health Management Information System (HMIS):** HMIS is a web based portal for monitoring the programs under National Health Mission (NHM), for monthly service delivery data reporting from public health facilities to improve program monitoring and management. Approximately 2 lakhs Health facilities are regularly reporting on HMIS Portal. It is integrated with GIS and available in public domain.
- **Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP):** Online portal for data entry, reports, data analysis, training modules, on which 90% districts report weekly surveillance data through portal.
- **Central Dashboard:** Central Dashboard is being developed for monitoring of key indicators related to different health programs of the Ministry. Dashboard system will collect data from existing public health information systems (i.e. HMIS, IDSP, MCTS, Nikshay etc.) The Dashboard system will also help in analyzing/ measuring progress on newer healthcare initiatives of MoHFW, Government of India.

The National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS), which has been dubbed ‘Modicare’ has the objective of extending Health Insurance to 100 million families, and raises the insurance ceiling to Rs.5 lakh per family. The scheme will target up to 500 million individuals from financially vulnerable households. Under the NHPS, four in ten Indians can avail of secondary and tertiary care in government and private hospitals, within the insurance cap earmarked per family. The scheme, to be launched jointly with states, is expected to be rolled out in six to eight months and is envisaged as the world’s biggest healthcare programme.

The Government is all set to address the Health issues of the country with all its might, we as citizens should rise up to the occasion and take active part in utilizing the various apps and facilities extended by the Government to realize the dream of a Healthy India in letter and spirit.

R Guleria
Director
AIIMS, New Delhi