

AIM OF THE JOURNAL

An established healthcare system is akin to an oiled machine driving the wheels of growth. It is not only necessary for the expansion of the economy but also for its sustenance and survival. In the absence of accessible healthcare, the entire workforce of a nation can be rendered handicapped.

In India, primarily through centrally-sponsored schemes the Centre has played a crucial role in providing healthcare along with the support from private parties, inspite of health being a State subject. Modern healthcare started in the post-independent era, with the establishment of the Ministry of Health. Since then, the government has invested lakhs of crores of rupees, majority of which came through the five-year plans, wherein public health has constantly been one of the most important focuses.

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned investment, there is a huge disparity between healthcare accessibility in rural and urban areas. However, it is expected that the existing paradigm is set to change. The rise of the Indian middle class saw healthcare become one of India's largest sectors, not only in terms of turnover but also in terms of the employment opportunities it generates. With the government's push for foreign investment, healthcare market in India is expected to reach US\$ 372 billion by 2022, driven by rising incomes, greater health awareness, lifestyle diseases and increasing access to insurance.¹ Apart from that, the medical devices market is also simultaneously expected to reach US\$ 11 billion.²

Although healthcare services offered by the private sector have largely eluded majority of the population, it has been successful in attracting patients from beyond the borders. While the discourse is upon the changing dynamics of the healthcare system, it is imperative to highlight the recent actions taken by the government, both at the state and central level. Launched in 2018, the 'Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana', a nationwide insurance scheme, nears completion of its first year with treatments worth Rs. 7500 Crores carried out in 47 lakh hospital treatments.³

Manifold reforms in the medical education and institution sector are set to begin with the passing of National Medical Commission Act, 2019 and

¹ *Healthcare Industry in India*, IBEF, at <https://www.ibef.org/industry/healthcare-india.aspx>, last accessed 30 /9/2019).

² Ibid.

³ *Ayushman Bharat Scheme Commended By UN, World Bank: Harsh Vardhan*, NDTV (13/9/2019), at <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/union-health-minister-harshvardhan-ayushman-bharat-scheme-commendedby-united-nations-world-health-2105906>, last seen on 12/10/2019.

awaited status of National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill, 2019, the National Commission for Homoeopathy Bill, 2019 and the Allied and Healthcare Professions Bill, 2018. More recently, the Rajasthan government awaits the “Right to Health” Act to be tabled.

World Health Organization (“WHO”) recognizes access to essential medicines as part of the ‘Right to Health’.⁴ Access to government approved medicines for a comprehensive recovery is the right of every citizen of this country. Issues surrounding manufacture, sale & distribution of medicines/drugs transcend well beyond constitutional rights, into the dominion of intellectual property in the form of patents balancing IPR rights with regard to accessibility.

Healthcare system is incomplete without the mention of mental healthcare. The Mental Healthcare Act of 2017 is an example of this concept gaining recognition in India. The misconceptions surrounding mental health and terming issues related to it as disorders has led to it still being considered a taboo in India, resulting in those revealing their conditions to be ostracized or discriminated against. A brewing issue at both the arenas, national and international level, of mental healthcare remains unexplored. In the present scenario, it becomes pertinent to understand its basic concept and work on making necessary changes in the system catering to their specific needs.

While coursing through a plethora of incumbent issues in healthcare, few perennial questions along with contemporary ones arise for deliberation. In spite of considerable investments and funding over the years, India lags behind in healthcare accessibility, benefits remain unreachable and funds go unutilized. For charting the route for an accessible and efficient healthcare system it is utmost necessary to analyse and comprehend the gaping holes that exist in the various policies affecting our healthcare system. The instant issue is a small step at providing the health law practitioners, policy makers and the general public with a comprehensive tool for understanding and reading about novel themes pertaining to healthcare in India.

Aryan Babele

Editor-in-Chief

On behalf of the RSRR Editorial Board

⁴ World Health Organization, *Access to essential medicines as part of the right to health*, available at https://www.who.int/medicines/areas/human_rights/en/, (last accessed 14 October, 2019).