

Role of the Government in Health

What is Health?

Health means our ability to remain free of illness and injuries. There are certain factors which affect our health.

Healthcare in India

- India has the largest number of medical colleges in the world and is among the largest producer of doctors.
- India is the fourth largest producer of medicines in the world.
- Most doctors settle in urban areas, while people in rural areas have to travel long distance for medical facilities.
- About 5 lakh people die from tuberculosis every year, while 2 million cases of malaria are reported every year.
- In India, a paradoxical situation exists as health care resources are uneven.

Private and Public Healthcare

- Healthcare is divided into two categories: Public health services and private health services.
- Public health services is a chain of health centres and hospitals run by the government. One important aspect of public health is that it is meant to provide quality healthcare services either free or at a low cost so that even the poor can seek treatment. It is available in both the rural and urban areas.
- Private health services are not owned or controlled by the government. People have to pay a lot of money for every service that they use.

Healthcare and Equality

- In India, private health services are increasing but public health services are not. As the cost of these private services is high, many people cannot afford them.
- Private services sometimes encourage practice which is unethical. Barely 20% of the Indian population can afford medicines that they require during an illness.
- It is the responsibility of the government to provide quality healthcare services to all its citizens, especially the poor and the disadvantaged.
- In 1996, Kerala decentralized its health budget at Panchayati level to ensure effective health planning.
- The best example of healthcare comes from Costa Rica where the government provides for adequate healthcare to people.

In a democratic country, it is the expectation of the people that government work for their welfare through the provision of education, health, employment, etc.

Health is a vital aspect because only healthy people can prove themselves resourceful.

Health means our ability to remain free of illness and injuries. In broader sense, health means something more than this. Apart from disease, we need to think of other factors such as clean drinking water, pollution-free surroundings etc. that affect our health. Adequate food is also essential for keeping ourselves in good health.

A life with stress will lead us to illness. Hence we need to be without mental strain. Thus, good health includes both a sound mind and sound body.

We need proper healthcare facilities to maintain good health.

Healthcare facilities include health centres, hospitals, laboratories for test, ambulance services, blood banks, etc.

In order to run such facilities, we need health workers, nurses, qualified doctors, etc.

We also need medicines and equipment that are essential for treating patients.

India has no dearth of qualified doctors. There are a large number of clinics and hospitals too. Perhaps, therefore, a large number of medical tourists come to our country for treatment at a reasonable cost.

India is the fourth largest producer of medicines in the world and is also a large exporter of medicines. Despite all this, the health situation in our country is very poor. The reason is that the government fails to make necessary healthcare available to all.

Healthcare facilities can be divided into two categories—Public health services and Private health facilities.

The public health service is a chain of health centres and hospitals run by the government. It is found in both the rural and urban areas.

At the village level, there are health centres where there is usually a nurse and a village health worker. They deal with common illnesses.

At the district level is the District Hospital that supervises all the health centres.

Big cities have many government hospitals.

Under the public health system, quality health care services are provided either free or at a low cost, so that even the poor can seek treatment.

Under this system, the action is also taken to prevent the spread of diseases like Tuberculosis, malaria, jaundice, cholera, diarrhoea, chikungunya, etc.

A wide range of private health facilities exists in our country. A large number of doctors run their own private clinics.

In the rural areas, Registered Medical Practitioners (RMPs) are found whereas in the urban areas a large number of doctors can be seen.

There are hospitals and nursing homes that are privately owned, and not run by the government.

Unlike public health services in private hospitals, patients have to pay a lot of money for their treatment.

In our country, private services are increasing but public services are not. As the private services are run for profit, the cost of these services is rather high. Poor people find it difficult to get treatment here.

Adequate healthcare is not available to all in the country. Only 20% of the population can afford all the medicines that they require during illness.

It has been found that 40% of people who are admitted to a hospital for some illness have to borrow money or sell some of their possessions to pay for the expenses.

For the poor, every illness is a curse. As they are undernourished and live in unhygienic conditions they frequently fall ill. The expenses on illness make their situation even worse.

So far women's health is associated, it is easily ignored.

Many tribal areas have few health centres.

Thus, we can say without a doubt that the health situation of most people in our country is not good.

However, Kerala has made efforts to provide adequate healthcare to people of the state.

Costa Rica is a country in North America. It is considered to be one of the healthiest countries in the continent.

The Costa Rican government curtailed the expenses on the army to spend it on health, education and other basic needs of the people. It provides them with safe drinking water, sanitation, nutrition and housing.

Medical Tourists: The foreigners who come to our country for medical treatment at hospitals that charge the reasonable cost.

Communicable Diseases: Diseases that spread from one person to another through water, food, air, etc.

Public: A service that is meant for all people in the country and is organised by the government. For example, schools, hospitals, etc.

Private: A service that is organised by an individual or company for their own profit.

OPD: It refers to the Out Patient Department. This is where people are first brought in and treated in a hospital without being admitted to any special ward.

RMPs: It refers to Registered Medical Practitioners. They are found in rural areas.