

# "Novel Corona Virus (Covid-19) Pandemic and Situation of Healthcare System in India"

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## **Abstract:**

Covid-19 infection cases has crossed 26, 00,000 including more than 2, 00,000 deaths in around 210 countries of the world and it cannot be predicted that what will be the numbers in near future because still the vaccine is not found to control the pandemic. The economies of many developed and developing countries are suffering badly due to lock downs for more than weeks and months. The impact of lockdown is not only short term but it will have a long term negative effects on economy of many countries in the world which would be resulted in global recession. The healthcare system of well developed countries like China, United States of America, Spain, Italy, Germany, France, England have collapsed due to the explosion of cases of corona virus infections in weeks and months. In India the number of corona virus infections has crossed 20,000 and number of deaths has crossed 700 and at the moment it cannot be predicted what will be the number in future. The situation might be worst in metropolitan cities like Mumbai and Delhi where population density is highest. Hence it is necessary to take overview of the present situation of India's healthcare system and it's preparedness to face the pandemic.

**Key words:** Covid-19, Corona Virus, Pandemic, Healthcare System, Lockdown

## **Introduction:**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced a nationwide lockdown for 40 days from midnight of March 24 to 3rd of May 2020 with

an emotional appeal that 138 Crore population of India have to practice social distancing, otherwise country will lose the war against the corona virus and slide back 21 years. By taking lessons from other suffering countries the government of India has been taking lots of efforts to fight against the pandemic. Indian railway is being prepared to convert in temporary isolated wards for the treatment of corona infected people. Industries are ordered for manufacturing of ventilators, medicines, masks, sanitizers in bulk quantity. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman has announced package of rupees 1, 70,000 crore for the control and relief from corona pandemic for the citizens of India. The package includes several benefits for poor and needy people of the country. State governments of all the states are also taking lots of efforts to control the spread of corona virus infection across the state through lock down. Along with the government private sector has also come forward to fight against the pandemic. Industrialists Ratan Tata, Mukesh Ambani, Ajim Premji, Tata Sons, Hindusthan Unilever and many charitable trusts has donated thousand crore rupees for the provision of required healthcare facilities. Celebrities have also given helping hand by giving donations and spreading awareness through social media. Government employees are also contributing by giving one day salary to the corona relief funds. All these are good measures but these are e temporary measures for arrangements of required medical facilities. But if unfortunately the pandemic could not get controlled then what will be the situation in India? The answer is

obviously terrific because the situation of healthcare system of India is not as good as compare to other developed and developing countries. There is a big shortfall between the huge population and healthcare facilities in the country. Funds can be raised but what about required infrastructure and skilled manpower which cannot be created overnight.

"Prevention is better than cure" is obviously true but if could not prevent such pandemic now and in future then what is the preparedness to cure? India is the second largest country in the world having more than 138 crore population; according to such a huge number it is necessary to think about the present status of healthcare facilities. there is no doubt that due to huge population India has to handle many other issues like poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, sanitization, irrigation etc. government of India has to make big provision in budget for these issues, but the corona virus pandemic has proven that along with these issues healthcare of people is also crucial. Covid-19 pandemic has heightened the necessity of improvement of healthcare facilities in India. This is the right time for government of India to revise the healthcare policy. The present situation indicates that pharmaceutical services in India are in better condition but other condition but other healthcare services should be improved. Specially public healthcare services are in need to be strengthened with advance adequate infrastructure and skilled manpower.

#### **The structure of Indian Healthcare System:**

India has mixed healthcare system comprising of public and private healthcare service providers. Private healthcare service providers are mostly concentrated in urban areas, providing secondary and tertiary healthcare services. Hence rural public is mostly dependent on public healthcare services provided by the government. The public

healthcare system of India has been serving a huge population of India through Sub-Centers to serve population of 5,000 people (3,000 in a remote area), Primary Health Centers in rural areas having population 30,000 or more (20, 000 in remote areas), Community Health Centers to serve 1, 20,000 people in urban areas (80,000 in remote areas) and District Hospitals which is expected at least one hospital in each district of India. The current healthcare policy and system have evolved from the Report on Health Survey and Development Committee, 1946 (i.e. Bhore Committee) which has been a landmark for India. The committee recommended the three tier healthcare system to provide preventive and curative healthcare in rural and urban areas by employing health workers on government payrolls and limiting the need for private practitioners. This was done with the object to ensure that access to primary care is independent of individual socioeconomic conditions. However, due to lack of capacity of public healthcare system to provide access to quality care resulted in a simultaneous evolution of the private healthcare system with a constant and gradual expansion of private healthcare services. Public healthcare system across the nation is a collection of all organized activities that prevent disease, prolong life and promote health and efficiency of people. Indian healthcare system has been historically dominated by provisioning of medical care and neglected public health.

The government of India has introduced a Twelfth five year Plan to expand the National Rural Health Mission to the entire country, which is known as National Health Mission. Under the mission Community based health insurance can assist in providing services to areas with disadvantages population. It can help to emphasize the responsibility of the local government in making resources available. Under the NHM the government of India has taken good initiatives to improve healthcare system by introducing various ambitious

schemes for welfare of poor population from urban as well as rural area of the country.

#### **Drawbacks of India's Healthcare System:**

##### **1. Lack of quality and accountability:**

Low quality of healthcare services is prevalent due to misdiagnosis, under trained health professionals and prescription of incorrect medicines. People in rural areas where this problem is common are prevented from improving their health situation. There is also lack of accountability across both private and public clinics in India. Public doctors feel less responsibility to their patients than the doctors in private clinics. Impolite interactions from staff also lead to less effective procedures.

##### **2. Lack of Infrastructure and healthcare professionals:**

Indian healthcare system has a big shortage of infrastructure required for providing good quality healthcare services. If see the current statistics there is only one bed available behind 84,000 people and only 84,000 ventilators are available behind 130 crore population. According to a study there is only one doctor behind 11,000 individuals in India. Many public as well as private hospitals don't have medical equipments like ventilators and other advance medical equipments. Also they don't have required advance medical emergency services like surgery, dialysis, X-ray, radiology, pathology facilities in many hospitals. The statistics are enough to be worried about the healthcare system in the situation like corona pandemic.

##### **3. Corruption and Malpractices:**

It is observed that healthcare professionals take more time off from their duty than the time they are allotted with the majority of absences for unofficial reasons. Government of India pays salaries for absences, leading to excessive personal days. This tendency is especially

heightened in Sub Centers and PHCs.

##### **4. Overcrowding of Healthcare Centers:**

Hospitals are overcrowded and understaffed without enough beds to treat their patients properly. Statistics shows that the number of health professionals in India is less than even the average number for other developing countries. Urban hospitals have twice the number of beds than rural hospitals; but the number is still insufficient as compare to the number of patients that visit. Sometimes patients are referred from rural areas to larger hospitals is also increasing overcrowding in urban hospitals. Overcrowding also increases spread of infectious diseases in crowded urban areas. Improper sanitation and waste disposal within hospitals can also lead to increased incidence of infectious diseases.

##### **5. Low cost or free of cost services:**

In India public healthcare services are being provided at low cost or mostly at free off cost. Since the government provides these services, don't charge any extra cost to serve patients. This is the reason for what mostly poor and marginal people come to the hospitals who cannot afford costly treatment in private hospitals.

##### **6. Lack of cooperation between public and private sector:**

Only 5% of visits of health practitioners are in private clinics or hospitals, many of which are paid for out of pockets. Money is spent on improving private services instead of funding to the public sector. Failure of government to initiate and foster effective partnerships between the public and private healthcare sectors which results in financial contracts that are not negotiated to help the common people. These contracts would allow the private sector to finance projects to improve knowledge and facilities in the public sector.

## 7. Barriers of Mobility and Access:

Social and financial inequality results in barriers of access and mobility to healthcare services in India. The services are not accessible for the disabled, mentally and elder people. Pregnant women are disadvantaged and in many rural Public hospitals often have a shortage of appropriate medicines or may supply them for excessively high prices, resulting in large out of pocket cost. Long physical distance prevents patients in getting immediate treatment and it may result in increasing complications. Also if travel far distance there is no assurance of receiving proper medical attention at that particular time.

## 8. Problems in rural areas:

In India rural areas have a shortage of medical professionals. 74% of doctors are practicing in urban areas that serve only 30% of the population. This is a major issue for access to healthcare in rural area. The lack of human resources causes citizens to rely on fraudulent or ignorant providers. Doctors don't prefer to work in rural areas due to insufficient housing, poor healthcare facilities, lack of better education facilities for children, unavailability of clean drinking water, inadequate supply of electricity, shortage of means of transportation, and absence of other important services like banks, posts, insurance, internet etc. in addition there exists a shortage of infrastructure for health services in rural areas.

## 9. Problems in urban areas:

The problem of access to healthcare arises not only in huge cities but in rapidly growing small urban areas. In urban areas there are fewer options available for healthcare services with less organized governmental bodies. Hence, there is often a lack of accountability and cooperation in private hospitals. In urban areas health inequalities arise due to difficulties in

residence, socio-economic status and discrimination against unlisted slums. Urban people use non-governmental i.e. private healthcare services which are plentiful. But however, these are often understaffed, require three times the payment as a public center and commonly have unfair practice methods. Private Doctors prefer to be specialized in a specific field so they reside in urban areas where there is a higher market opportunities and financial ability for those services.

## 10. Out-of-pocket private payments:

Being one of the most populous countries, India has the most private healthcare services in the world. 75% of the total expenditure on healthcare makes up out-of-pocket private payments. Only one fifth of total healthcare is financed publicly. This is in contrast to most other countries in the world. According to the WHO, in 2007 India ranked 184 out of 191 countries in the amount of public expenditure spent on healthcare out of total GDP. Public spending was stagnated from 0.9% to 1.2% of total GDP in 1990 to 2010. Medical and non-medical out-of-pocket private payments can affect access to healthcare services. Poorer population is being more affected by this than wealthier. The poor people pay a disproportionately higher percent of their income towards out-of-pocket expenses than the rich people. The Round National Sample Survey of 1955 indicated that 40% of all people sell or borrow assets to pay for hospitalization. The data shows that financial ability plays a role in determining healthcare access.

## Suggestions to improve healthcare system:

### 1. Medical Colleges and Institutions:

Number of medical colleges and medical in situations should be increase to fill gap between numbers of doctor behind individual citizen of the country. Presently the ratio between doctor and individuals is 1:11,000 which is too inadequate. There should be at least one medical



college in every district of the country. Advanced medical equipments and facilities should be provided to medical colleges to provide quality education. Also they should be provided sufficient government grants so as to make medical education affordable.

## **2. Development of Paramedical Services:**

Number of paramedical education institutions like nursing, pathology, pharmacy, hospital management, naturopathy, physiotherapy etc should also be increase in the ratio of medical colleges so as to cater healthcare needs of growing population of the country. Paramedical services providing institutions should also be provided government grants.

## **3. Control on consultancy fees and prices of medicines:**

There should be a fair control of government over consultancy fees or medical bills being charged by the private healthcare professionals through proper supervision channel. Also the prices and quality of medicines should be control by the government efficiently by ensuring transparency so that people should get medical treatment at reasonable cost.

## **4. Research and Development:**

More attention should be given to research and development in the area of healthcare facilities. New advance research laboratories should be developed across the country. Motivation should be given to doctors and engineers for invention of new and advance medical equipments and techniques. Government should attract and retain brilliant brains of scientists, doctors, engineers, pharmacists for the purpose of research and development in the field of healthcare services. Financial assistance should be provided to pharmaceutical companies, medical colleges, universities, private professional institutions for the purpose of research and development.

## **5. Motivation to domestic industries:**

Motivation should be given to domestic industries for manufacturing of advance healthcare equipments and to provide better healthcare services to improve quality and quantity of healthcare facilities in the country. Government should make additional budgetary provision for providing quality medical and paramedical education. As well as incentives should be given to the industries that engaged in manufacturing of advance medical and surgical equipments. Domestic industries which are engaged in manufacturing health related products and providing healthcare services should also be motivate through various government schemes to work efficiently.

## **6. Corporate Social Responsibility:**

Corporate should be motivated to utilize their CSR funds for the development of healthcare facilities in the country. Government should make compulsory to all companies to utilize 50% of their CSR fund on development of healthcare facilities especially in rural and remote area. People should also be motivated to give donation directly to the government institutions which are engaged in providing healthcare facilities by providing them attractive tax benefits.

## **Conclusion:**

Covid-19 pandemic has been proved that healthcare system is the most important systems than any other system for each and every country in the world. The world's best healthcare systems of countries like Italy, USA, Spain, France has been collapsed due to the spread of novel corona virus pandemic. In such type of emergency situation the public healthcare system has to play a vital role to take preventive and curative measures under the guidance of the leadership of the country with the help of utilization of available

resources. The central government and state government of all the affected states in India have been fighting like a warrior against the pandemic with the help of public healthcare system and police force.

The government of India has tried well to improve the public healthcare system by taking good initiatives with introducing many healthcare schemes under The 12th five year plan, but it cannot be denied that public healthcare system of India is in need to be improved at large because still there are many drawbacks in the public healthcare system of India. The public healthcare system becomes more important than private healthcare system of the country in such type of pandemic. Hence public healthcare system should upgrade with

an adequate healthcare professionals and required infrastructure. In India private healthcare services are well developed but are not affordable to every citizen and also are not that useful as compare to public healthcare services in such type of pandemic situation. Hence, in developing country like India having more than 138 crore population the public healthcare system should be strengthened than private healthcare services.

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