

HEALTH IS WEALTH: ROLE OF THE HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY DURING COVID-19
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Abstract:

In this article, we will discuss how health is crucial and we should take time out of our busy schedules to look after ourselves.

Being mentally and physically fit is the greatest asset one could have. No matter how wealthy a person might be if he is sick or diseased, he cannot enjoy any luxury.

During the pandemic, people started taking their health seriously and we could feel the shift from materialist things to the more valuable thing that is life.

The government put forth many provisions to prevent and mitigate covid, such as isolation centres, providing subsidized food, medicines, transportation and the development of vaccines.

Though we as a nation tried our best to handle the global pandemic, but we all felt the cracks in our health care sector. And should put forth measures to bring in advancement in this sector and to prepare ourselves for upcoming future pandemics.

Key words: *Pandemic, Subsidized, Mitigate, Dysfunctional Healthcare, Socio-Economic*



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Introduction:

The internet has brought the world together, people are connected 24/7. This continuous excess to each other life has taken a great toll on our health, due to increased stress levels and hectic lifestyles. ⁽¹⁾

Being healthy which is the state of mental and physical fitness is the greatest asset anyone can have. No matter how much money one owes if the individual is not healthy it's all in vain.

Health is equivalent to all the luxuries a person could have. So, maintaining health should be any individual's priority. So, investing in one's health is always fruitful, we generally in today's world of the rat race and competition forget to take care of our body, we think it is okay to spend millions on buying a house but will think twice to buy health insurance.

On the contrary, the millions worth of a house is of no use if we are not in a state of health to enjoy it. So, one should always invest in one's healthy lifestyle because we are what we eat and in health care.

The Covid era:

In 2020, when Covid hit India, we saw many changes in the approach of people towards life. We started taking life seriously. The health sector played a crucial role to curb the effects of Covid-19.



The government took many measures like the supply of food products to the economically underprivileged class of the society, access to healthcare, isolation centres, providing distance education to students to continue their academic course even during the global pandemic, and transportation facilities for people migrating to their native places, also the EMIs were waved off during Covid period to support the working class and reduce their burden.

The health care professionals played a crucial role during this tragic period, they worked effortlessly to provide treatment to the patients with all the available resources. The working class suffered the most during Covid as their source of income was hampered due to the complete lockdown nationwide.

The vaccine was produced on a large scale in India and also exported to other countries. Along with healthcare professionals, the pharmaceutical industry played a significant role in preventing and mitigating the damage caused by Covid-19.

The government and private health sectors both worked tirelessly to set up isolation centres and hospital beds and to arrange staff, medicines and oxygen cylinders.

The private health sector, which is 60% of the country's total health sector, has a tremendous contribution in managing Covid-19. ⁽⁴⁾

It also hampered the financial state as medical tourism in the country was stopped due to a complete lockdown causing the air travel ban. Also, the government was instructed to treat Covid patients on priority which took a toll on OPD's revenue. ⁽⁸⁾



Shortcomings:

In the Economic Survey held in 2020-21 recommended that we need to increase the spending on healthcare services from 1% to 2.5-3% of GDP, to “reduce the out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE) from 65% to 35% of the overall healthcare spend”. ⁽⁹⁾

During the pandemic, we all as a nation experienced the cracks in our health infrastructure. When the pandemic struck, there was a limited supply of medical facilities, trained professionals, and government provisions for the society's health sector; the most crucial point was enough funds for executing the same.

We have experienced a tremendous loss of population due to inadequate planning and improper treatment.

When any nation suffers from a pandemic its GDP gets hit by 10%, and the health of the population ultimately hampers the economic structure of that nation. ⁽¹⁰⁾

Loss of masses results in a drop in the labour supply and also slows down economic progress by partially disabling the strength of the working class.

As it is rightly said “prescription for prosperity” which means a proper functional healthcare system can benefit a nation in many ways because if the manpower of a nation is fit and fine it will ultimately contribute to the prosperity of that nation.

Covid-19 acted like a reality check on all the developed nations too, apparently, they are not too developed to tackle the wrath of micro-organisms. We failed miserably to provide patients with health care facilities and medicines.

As a nation with a huge population and resources, we should buckle up our health care sector and invest more in medical facilities.

Also, the core changes that need to be put forth are to increase the number of educational universities, giving opportunities to the brains present in India to be educated and become health care professionals. We saw a shortage of doctors and healthcare professionals as a leading cause of the dysfunctional healthcare crisis when Covid struck India.

Post effects:

Now the health sector has made many advancements post-Covid to fulfil the gaps in the health care sectors. For instance, plantation of oxygen plants near many metropolitan and urban areas to supply oxygen cylinders to the medical facilities as early as possible. The vaccination camps were held by the government to make sure every citizen is vaccinated.

The healthcare industry, along with the central and state governments, undertook a robust response plan to tackle the pandemic by setting up of dedicated COVID-19 hospitals, isolation centres and tech-enabled mapping of resources. ⁽⁴⁾ To effectively manage the outbreak, the Indian government also leveraged technology and developed various applications both at the central and state levels. The Aarogya Setu mobile app which assisted in syndromic mapping, contact tracing and self-assessment were widely used throughout the country. Such technology platforms were used to supplement the response management, which included delivery of essential items in containment zones, teleconsultations with patients, bed management and real-time monitoring and review by the authorities. ⁽⁴⁾


Conclusion:

1. Health should be given priority in day-to-day life, we should make sure we are eating healthy, homemade food.
2. The government should invest more in health care sectors and redesign its budget. Make a proper policy to tackle future pandemics.
3. Increase the number of healthcare professionals by increasing the seats in medical institutes or by increasing the number of medical colleges.
4. Though there were many steps taken by the government to handle the Covid spread, but its successful execution was missing.
5. Due to Covid-19, our health care sector has come under the limelight and, unfortunately, for all the wrong reasons. We do not have a health care support enough to look after the 138 million population.
6. We should have a 5-year health care strategy to be prepared for upcoming diseases, and policies to free the burden from the poor working class from their current state.
7. The pharmaceutical industry should also be encouraged as it is the foundation of any health care programme.

Suggestions:


1. We need to develop a healthcare system which will not collapse in the face of any forthcoming pandemic, also ensuring that the health facilities are available to all people irrespective of socio-economic class, by implementing provisions such as investing two-thirds of the government's health care budget in nations healthcare, as proposed in the National Health Policy (NHP) 2017. ⁽⁹⁾
2. Ayushman Bharat's aim to update and make 150,000 government primary health care facilities (existing) operational by December 2022 would provide the much-needed momentum to our healthcare systems. ⁽⁹⁾
3. However, it is important to understand that healthcare infrastructure is not about hospitals alone, but also about medical colleges and trained staff who can adequately address the doctor-patient ratio in the country. ⁽⁹⁾

Methodology:

The overall approach of the study is to seek knowledge about the importance of health and post-Covid changes in people's mindsets and post-Covid government approach.

For this purpose, data has been collected from secondary sources like books, journals, Newspaper, magazines, reports and some articles on the internet.

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