

NIMHANS Digital Academy to train mental health professionals virtually

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Through the academy, it will provide large scale training to healthcare service providers like medical officers, psychologists, social workers and nurses to deliver quality mental healthcare services throughout the country.

Health Minister J.P. Nadda has launched NIMHANS Digital Academy to train mental health professionals through virtual classrooms, saying the government will see if mental health disorders can be screened at primary health centres under Ayushman Bharat.

"We must match speed, skill and scale to implement the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017," he said while addressing the first batch of professionals enrolled for undergoing courses in psychiatry and psychiatric social work.

Nadda said the Act brings forth a stronger and more robust legal scaffold and humane and patient-centric rights based approach for mental healthcare in the country, according to a statement by the Health and Family Welfare Ministry.

"We have to be ambitious and ensure that the Act increases in scale of operations," he said. The minister also released the training modules and curricula for various training programmes to be undertaken at the NIMHANS Digital Academy.

About 150,000 sub-centres that will be converted into Health and Wellness Centres under Ayushman Bharat to deliver comprehensive primary health care, Nadda said: "In the coming times, we have to see if we can detect mental health disorders at these centres and if it can be included in the universal screening ... We can think of training our frontline functionaries in detection."

National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru, which has always been in the forefront of capacity building and human resource training in the mental health sector, has an established infrastructure for starting a digital academy.

Through the academy, it will provide large scale training to healthcare service providers like medical officers, psychologists,

social workers and nurses to deliver quality mental healthcare services throughout the country.

Up to 50 people can be trained in the virtual classroom with only a mobile phone with 3G connection required at the receiver's end. The courses for different categories of healthcare providers would be of about 30 hours duration each and spread across a period of three months.

The courses will be digitally delivered to remotely located healthcare providers across the country. After successful completion of the course and evaluation, the participants will be awarded "Diploma in Community Mental Health" by NIMHANS, Bengaluru.

Similar training programmes will also be started by the Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi, and Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health, Tezpur, and other mental health institutes supported by the ministry.