

Challenges in healthcare industry in India

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The Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI), the prima association of research and innovation driven pharmaceutical companies in India, held a seminar in Mumbai, titled 'Access to healthcare - Challenges and the Way Forward.'

In his opening address, Tapan Ray, Director General, OPPI, deliberated upon the healthcare consumption trends in India. Setting the agenda for the seminar, he stated "Access to healthcare is a subject of immense significance for India particularly with the increasing incidences of new diseases in the country, from cancer and diabetes to chronic kidney disease and cardiovascular diseases. We need to ensure that Indians not only get prompt and easy physical access to healthcare facilities but also that they can afford the treatment. This can only be done by reducing the out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure in India, which is currently as high as 75%. The government needs to move quickly on plans for universal healthcare access and renew its focus on public health infrastructure and the health care delivery system."

A recently conducted study "Understanding Healthcare Access in India - What is the Current State?" by the IMS Institute for Healthcare Informatics has revealed that the out-of-pocket expenditure for both outpatient and inpatient treatments in India can be curtailed by a margin of 45% by addressing four key dimensions of healthcare access:

1. Physical accessibility and location of healthcare facilities
2. Availability and Capacity of needed resources
3. Quality and Functionality of service required for patient treatment
4. Affordability of treatment relative to a patient's income

Providing an elaborative and significant insight into the Indian healthcare market to improve access, Amit Backliwala, Managing Director, IMS Health Information and Consulting Services, expressed "Inadequate resourcing and financing of the public sector health infrastructure negatively impacts the availability of healthcare workers and creates a poor perception of

public health facilities. This forces the rural to look up to expensive treatment options, which in turn adversely impacts overall healthcare access."

On the similar lines, Ranjit Shahani, President OPPI, and Vice Chairman and Managing Director, Novartis, commented "While the IMS Study provides a valuable information tool for policy makers and the healthcare and pharmaceutical industry as a whole, the presence of so many stakeholders here for the seminar signals an acceptance of the need to align efforts to advance healthcare access for all Indians."