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Industry wants Govt to encourage innovation, technology

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The industry stakeholders are looking for more from the government



Though the current government has achieved a lot during its tenure, there are certain areas where the Industry is expecting the new government to look into for better results. The industry stakeholders are looking for more from the government in terms of Improving Regulations, Skill Development, more Interaction with Industry, Emphasizing on genetic testing, Standardize system for generic drugs, Work on import duty structure, Rules to avoid counterfeit medicines and Enhance digital health.

BioSpectrum interacted with Industry experts and gathered their views-

Rishad Dadachanji, Director, SCHOTT KAISHA- "It will be great to see further improvement in our regulatory policies, especially in the area of patent and price control, to boost growth and present India as a preferred destination for new generation pharmaceutical market. We, as a firm are more focused on research and innovation. We understand that market patented products earn higher margins, which enables companies to plough back resources into R&D and innovative."

A. Vijayarajan, Co-founder, CTO, InnAccel Technologies- "the Human Resource availability in these areas is limited at times. Worker training and skill development is an area that can be focused on going forward."

Dr SD Ravetkar, Executive director, Serum Institute of India- "As a matter of fact, even I am ready to be advisor to PMO to improve things and to make it at par with developed countries."

Dr Shravan Subramanyam, MD, Roche Diagnostics India and Neighbouring Markets- "Reports indicate unspent healthcare expenditure allocations at the Centre and across various States in India. In my view, now would be a good time to channel some of such unspent funds towards establishing a digital infrastructure that would professionalise screening and diagnostics services to people across the country. With this, inclusive healthcare will be a meaningful reality in India, keeping people healthy over the long term. We believe that active cooperation between the Government and private healthcare service providers and delivery organisations will maximise capacity utilisation and establish an inclusive and relevant healthcare system in India."

Dr Sujit Paul, Managing Director, StayHappi Pharmacy- "The government that comes into power needs to set standards for a drug quality assurance before the doctors could go ahead with the prescription of drugs with generic names. The government should also encourage the marketing of generic drugs under different trade names. The branded generic medicines, according to doctors and even common people, are more effective and safer to use. The government should also

loosen down a bit on the rules for the export of generic medicines to different countries."

Dr. BS Ajaikumar, Chairman and CEO, Healthcare Global Enterprises- "Today, majority of the system constitutes of private healthcare and the Indian government spends only about 1 percent of its GDP on healthcare, which is among the lowest globally for any country. However, to meet India's burgeoning healthcare needs, both the public and private sector will have to join hands to build value-based and cashless healthcare. This implies providing a high-end care at a subsidised cost compared to other countries; to enhance healthcare services.

Ayushman Bharat is an attempt to ensure that universal healthcare reaches the weaker section of the society and it may certainly boost the ratio of people availing primary healthcare and some of the secondary healthcare. The cost of some procedures under Ayushman Bharat is 20% below the Central Government Health Scheme. Hence, the current framework of the scheme will not be beneficial for people who need tertiary care as the remunerations under the scheme will not be sufficient to avail value based healthcare. Under the scheme, tertiary healthcare service providers will be forced to cut cost at every level which will lead to offering a sub-standard healthcare to patients under the scheme.

The only solution is to have a mandatory universal health cover for all sections of the society. This will increase the pool and allow cross-subsidy between the government and the private sector for different sections of the society. Over and above, the power to judge the need should be with an autonomous insurance company that can negotiate with the private service providers on a reasonable remuneration which is beneficial for both parties. It is a proven and successful model followed by various developed countries and will bring a sustenance in India as well.

Ayushman Bharat scheme to be taken forward by the next government should focus on fortifying of primary care, incorporation of outpatient treatment and general health care delivery framework with a specific end goal to accomplish Universal Health Coverage."

Dr V L Ramprasad, Chief Operating Officer, MedGenome Labs – "Genetic testing has proven to be a boon in the area of cancer care, rare diseases and reproductive care. Researchers across the world are working to prove its benefits in other critical disease areas. India currently lacks acceptance of genetic testing as a method of diagnosis majorly due of lack of awareness of its benefits. Government can propel its acceptance in two ways: one by making genetic testing mandatory for critical disease areas like cancer, rare diseases etc. and secondly by facilitating grants to undertake such cost intensive research that goes behind developing such tests that can bring down the burden of healthcare in multiple ways. Besides, the need of the hour is to educate our medical practitioners on genomics which is a relatively new field."

Ajay Poddar, Managing Director, Syenergy Environics – "More support and recognition for non-government certified research is required. There is also a need for propagation and promotion in other countries."

Karan Daftary, Director, Business Development and Head, Corporate Marketing, SIRO Clinpharma – "The ease in submission of trials and approval processes continue to bring India at par with Global standards."

Dr GM Warke, Founder and CMD, HiMedia Laboratories – "One space to improve I find is inverted import duty structure which is affecting the indigenous small scale/medium scale industrial units manufacturing Culture media products. The import duty on raw material is high and that on final products is much less. This is affecting Indian organisations. I also find that better export promotion scheme to be introduced. Tax Benefit award for export can be improved. The measures to stabilize dollar are most welcome. Also more simplification of GST structure is required."

Pavan Choudary, Chairman & DG MTal – "We look forward to streamlining the custom duties structure to ensure that the wide majority of medical devices which are imported stay accessible to the patient. Also, standing clearly against profiteering, we endorse rationalizing trade margins from the price to stockist as a mechanism to control the high MRPs. The approach seems equitable though we feel that the margin given for cancer drugs could have been higher. Cognizant of the turbulence that an overcompensation may create for hospitals, we feel that the margin decided for medical devices should be substantially higher and at least so much that it allows the healthcare providers to sustain and continually offer quality outcomes."

Vinod Ramnani, Chairman, Opto Circuits India – "Reforms like giving incentives for medical equipment manufacturers to reduce import dependency of majority of advanced medical equipment currently used in the country are needed. This would help the Government in fiscal prudence and will increase 'Make in India'. This would also be a proud moment for the country to have large Indian medical equipment companies."

Manoj KM, Director - Business Development and International Business, Avery Dennison – "We would urge the next government to make rules more stringent to avoid counterfeiting or falsified medicines and make the medicines more affordable. We can also learn from the policies of the Developing countries who have a stringent regulation around falsified

medicines which is known as (FMD). As an example, one of the technology being used in these countries is Temper Evident Labels which are used for all products which are packed in monocartons eg. Blisters tablets, ophthalmic products etc. Use of Temper evident labels helps in avoiding any kind of counterfeiting with the medicine. These directives which are successfully working in developed countries like US & Europe can be reviewed and can be implemented in India as well. ”

Pavan Mocherla, Managing Director, BD - India / South Asia – "The execution and the concepts behind the government’s moves on healthcare are short-sighted and probably not global in nature. Government is aspiring to provide healthcare access to all without doing its role – either as investor through its Public Healthcare facilities network or as a regulator by safeguarding patient outcomes or as an enabler. It’s moves on price capping, preference in public procurement to local industry reflect a short-sighted and arbitrary approach that can derail the government’s aspirations of providing quality products and ultimately quality delivery of healthcare.

I believe, the government should focus on providing access of quality products to patients in India irrespective of where it is manufactured. As one of the leading global medical technology companies in India, we can understand preference for local industry in Public Procurement. Despite operating and investing in India, MNC companies are being discriminated with this policy. For instance, the local content norm of 50-60% even if a company were to have local manufacturing plant is a glaring shortcoming. A MNC may procure raw material on a global scale and produce the end product in India, but, according to this policy, the MNC will be disqualified as a local company in public procurement. Such moves by the government will only harm the environment for innovation and force MNCs to curtail further investments.

The med tech sector is in its nascent stage. In order to meet the growing needs of the Indian patients, our expectation from the government is that it will build an ecosystem that encourages and rewards medical innovation through appropriate regulations. Government must play the role of safeguarding the patient interest, promoting safe and effective outcomes through innovation and creating environment for the industry to continue investing in India."

Zoya Brar, Founder & Managing Director, CORE Diagnostics – The need of the hour is to harness the power of data to prevent, diagnose and treat critical illnesses. Digital health records can prematurely diagnose diseases. Emerging technologies such as AI, ML, can also regularly monitor patients and help diagnose complex conditions on an earlier stage. Nowadays, many doctors and diagnostic firms are already using data records through artificial intelligence systems to provide disease and patient-centric treatment. With this approach, terminal diseases such as cancer, give the patient the longest possible lifespan. It would be interesting to see mobile technologies transferring hospital-based care to technology-enabled care, telemedicine and advanced imaging technologies to address the availability of health specialists in remote and rural areas which will eventually help in improving the accessibility to healthcare. In the next few years, the Indian health sector can be made more tech-savvy.