

## WHO launches new guidelines for diagnosis of drug-resistant TB

The World Health Organization (WHO) has released new guidelines on using targeted next-generation sequencing (NGS) tests for diagnosing drug-resistant tuberculosis (TB). These recommendations aim to expedite the detection of drug resistance using advanced technologies. Dr. Tereza Kasaeva, Director of WHO's Global TB Programme, highlights the importance of these advancements in providing rapid and accurate diagnoses to combat TB effectively. Accompanying the guidelines is an operational handbook offering detailed guidance for implementing these recommendations, including procedures and algorithms for testing.

Additionally, WHO has launched a TB sequencing portal in collaboration with FIND and Unitaid, housing over 56,000 sequences of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. This portal provides a comprehensive knowledge base on TB mutations and drug resistance, featuring a dashboard for data visualization and search functions. The portal allows users to upload and analyze new data, contributing to a better understanding of TB mutations and drug resistance patterns. Overall, these initiatives aim to enhance TB diagnosis and treatment by leveraging cutting-edge technologies and collaborative efforts.





## **3.4 billion globally affected by neurological conditions: Lancet Study**

A major new analysis published in *The Lancet Neurology* journal revealed that neurological conditions are now the leading cause of ill health and disability globally. The analysis included data from 1990 to 2021 and showed a substantial rise in the number of people with neurological conditions such as stroke, Alzheimer's disease, and dementia. This rise is due to an aging population and increased exposure to risk factors.

The researchers found that the global burden of neurological diseases, measured in disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), increased by 18% over the past 3 decades. Stroke, neonatal encephalopathy, migraine, dementia, and diabetic neuropathy were the top contributors to this health loss. Neurological complications from COVID-19 also ranked among the top 20 causes of DALYs.

The study also identified significant disparities between high-income and low-income countries. Over 80% of neurological deaths and health loss occur in low- and middle-income countries, where access to treatment and rehabilitation is limited. The researchers emphasized the need for effective and affordable preventative and treatment strategies to address this growing global health concern.





## Delhi expands health infrastructure with 11 new hospitals

The Economic Survey of Delhi 2023-24 revealed a significant transformation in the city's healthcare landscape, marked by the construction of 11 new hospitals and the upgrading of existing medical facilities on 1st March 2024. Finance Minister Atishi, presenting the report in the Delhi Assembly, emphasized the government's commitment to bolstering the city's health infrastructure.

This move was prompted by the alarming report of 7,493 dengue cases and seven fatalities in the fiscal year, highlighting the pressing need for improved health services. The construction of new hospitals, including projects in Vikaspuri, Jwalapuri, Shalimar Bagh, and Sultanpuri, aimed to enhance healthcare capacity significantly. Notably, the Vikaspuri Hospital project was 45% complete, with a target completion date of December 31, 2024.

Additionally, the expansion of GTB Hospital in East Delhi with a 1912-bed block, though 82% complete, faced delays awaiting the sanction of a revised estimate. The government's investment in health and family welfare more than doubled over seven years, underlining its focus on healthcare. With the development of new hospitals and the upgrade of existing facilities, Delhi is poised to meet the healthcare challenges of its growing population, promising improved services and relief to overcrowded hospitals.



## Health Ministry's roadmap to reduce snakebite deaths by 2030

On 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024, India's Union Health Minister Mr. Apurva Chandra launched a National Action Plan for Snakebite Envenoming (NAP-SE) aiming to cut snakebite deaths in half by 2030. The plan outlines a framework for states to develop their own snakebite control strategies. Public awareness materials including booklets, posters, and videos were launched to educate communities.

A snakebite helpline will be piloted in five states to provide immediate aid and information to those affected by snakebites. Additionally, a National Rabies Control Program website was launched to offer resources and updates on rabies. This website will serve as a platform for data collection and public information, including locating clinics and hospitals.

Lastly, the National One Health Programme for zoonotic diseases was also introduced. This program aims to strengthen surveillance of diseases transmitted between animals and humans. Snakebites are a serious issue in India, causing an estimated 50,000 deaths annually. The new initiative hopes to improve access to treatment and information to reduce snakebite deaths.

## 7<sup>th</sup> CII AYUSH Conclave organized by Confederation of Indian Industry

The 7<sup>th</sup> CII AYUSH Conclave, organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry, addressed the emerging trends and market potential of the AYUSH sector in India on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024. The conclave was attended by a diverse range of stakeholders, including industry leaders, academics, and government officials, and discussions centered on bolstering the sector's global presence and domestic demand, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the AYUSH industry reaching a value of \$24 billion in a decade, Secretary of the Ministry of AYUSH, Padmashri Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, underscored its growing acceptance and outlined initiatives to enhance research and evidence-building efforts. Key initiatives such as the Ayush Grid platform for digitizing services and collaborative ventures with premier institutions like AIIMS were highlighted. Emphasizing collaboration between industry and government, efforts were directed towards achieving quality standards across AYUSH products and services. Presentations by industry leaders showcased advancements such as the incorporation of AYUSH terminology in global disease classifications, the establishment of the Global Centre for Traditional Medicine, and insurance coverage mandates for AYUSH treatments by IRDAI. The conclave reflected a concerted push to modernize and mainstream AYUSH practices through collaborative efforts.







## Government issues updated guidelines on UCPMP 2024

On 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024, the Government issued updated Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices (UCPMP) guidelines. The code guidelines restrict pharmaceutical companies from sponsoring travel and accommodation for doctors and their families to attend conferences and workshops unless the doctor is a speaker at the event. Additionally, the UCPMP bans all gifts to healthcare professionals.

The Department of Pharmaceuticals distributed the UCPMP to pharmaceutical associations and instructed them to establish ethics committees to investigate any potential breaches of the code. The repercussions for violating the code include requiring the company to recover any improperly given gifts or funds, suspending, or expelling the company from the association, or reporting the offense to the relevant government agency.

The code assigns ultimate responsibility for adhering to the UCPMP to the company's CEO. CEOs are required to submit a self-declaration every year, confirming their company's compliance. This declaration can be uploaded to the association's website or directly submitted to the government's UCPMP portal.

The implementation of this code aims to prevent pharmaceutical companies from influencing doctors through gifts and sponsored trips. Supporters of the code believe this will ultimately reduce healthcare costs for patients. However, concerns exist that essential training programs for healthcare professionals may be restricted under the new guidelines.

# NATHEALTH 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Arogya Bharat Summit 2024

On 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024, NATHEALTH organized its 10th Annual Arogya Bharat Summit with the theme, Arogya Bharat: India's journey towards health for all and the crucial role of the private sector. The Summit served as a pivotal platform for promoting collaboration between the industry and the government, facilitating discussions, deliberations, and strategic planning to pave the way for a resilient and robust India. Over 500 healthcare leaders and experts convened to discuss the role of private healthcare in India's Universal Health Coverage (UHC) agenda, resulting in seven key outcomes, including a vision roadmap for health financing and partnerships, and the launch of a whitepaper on patient safety.

Deliberations at the summit encompassed a wide array of pertinent topics such as MedTech expansion, digital health adoption, and ethical standards. The summit also featured discussions on PPPs, indigenous manufacturing, and medical education reform. Health-tech startups were given a platform to collaborate and showcase innovations. The two-day summit was also packed with sessions like Unlocking private capital for achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC), Challenges in the hospital ecosystem, Reimagining service delivery in tier 2-3 geographies, Navigating compliance and promoting indigenous manufacturing, Opportunities to revolutionize medical education, and many more crucial issues. The summit witnessed Fireside Chats on health, climate & sustainability and how innovation can power the next wave of healthcare which saw high participation from the delegates.

The summit concluded with the 3rd NATHEALTH Impact Awards recognizing organizations contributing to a resilient healthcare ecosystem. Leaders highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships in driving healthcare transformation. Dr. Ashutosh Raghuvanshi emphasized the challenges of disease burden and the necessity for accessible, quality healthcare. He also underscored the potential for innovation and collaboration within the private healthcare sector, stressing the importance of public-private partnerships to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC).







## SC urges centre to set nationwide hospital treatment charges

On 4th March 2024, the Supreme Court directed the central government to swiftly establish standardized hospital treatment charges within six weeks, potentially accelerating the adoption of cashless health insurance nationwide. The move aimed to address the disparity in treatment costs across hospitals hindering the implementation of cashless health insurance. The court's decision followed a PIL filed by an NGO, urging the determination of fee rates under Rule 9 of the Clinical Establishment (Central Government) Rules, 2012.

The NGO cited significant variations in treatment costs, such as cataract surgery expenses ranging from Rs 30,000 to Rs 140,000 in private hospitals compared to Rs 10,000 in government hospitals. While the government sought collaboration with state authorities to determine rates, the lack of response prompted the court to emphasize the central government's responsibility. The general insurance industry anticipated positive outcomes, particularly for initiatives like 'Cashless Everywhere,' allowing policyholders access to treatments across hospitals nationwide.

However, cautionary notes from the Indian Medical Association and Hospital Board of India raised concerns about potential risks associated with the initiative's current format. Despite these concerns, over 40,000 registered hospitals in the country stand ready to offer cashless facilities to over 30 crore health insurance policyholders under the new system.

# IIM Raipur pioneers India's inaugural center for healthcare innovation

IIM Raipur has partnered with Digital Health Associates to set up the consulting arm, Centre for Health, Innovation, Policy, and Digital Health (CHIP-DH), marking a pioneering initiative in India's healthcare landscape. Positioned as the country's premier consulting hub, it aims to address the dearth of public sector consulting, traditionally monopolized by multinationals.

With a focus on leveraging technology and innovation to support initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojna (PM-JAY) and the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM), CHIP-DH endeavours to provide specialized expertise across various levels of healthcare leadership.

Dr. Rajendra Pratap Gupta, Chair-Emeritus of the center, underscores its role in shaping innovative policies and programs and bridging global insights with local realities. Collaborations with state governments and the introduction of educational programs, including postgraduate courses and training for hospital CEOs, reflect the center's holistic approach to healthcare transformation. Prof. Ram Kumar Kakani, Director of IIM Raipur, emphasizes healthcare as a strategic focus area, echoing the belief in the imperative of breakthrough innovation. Dr. Gupta envisions CHIP-DH as a beacon of thought leadership, fostering an innovation ecosystem and driving capacity building across India and neighbouring countries.



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