

HEALTHCARE ROUNDUP FOR MARCH 2023

RAJASTHAN GOVERNMENT PASSES RIGHT TO HEALTH BILL, SPARKS PROTEST BY DOCTORS; **STRIKE CALLED OFF AFTER 17 DAYS POST CONSENSUS WITH GOVERNMENT**

Rajasthan became the first state in the country to pass the Right to Health Bill on March 21. It gives every resident of the state the right to emergency treatment and care “without prepayment of requisite fee or charges” by any public health institution, health care establishment, and designated health care centres.

It defines a “health care establishment” as the whole or any part of a public or private institution, facility, building, or place operated to provide health care. If a patient does not pay the charges after emergency care, stabilisation and referral, the government will reimburse the health care provider. While the government’s intention is noble, it became a cause of conflict among private doctors who believed there was ambiguity in the definition of emergency in this Bill - a provision in the Bill states that if any patient comes in an emergency to any doctor, he/she has to treat him/her, and if they can’t, they should transfer the patient to the doctor concerned on his/her own. Doctors in the state from various hospitals went on a strike, bringing healthcare services to a standstill.

The Bill defines public health emergency as an occurrence or imminent threat of illness or health condition that is believed to be caused by bioterrorism, the appearance of a novel or previously controlled or eradicated infectious agent or biological toxin, a natural disaster, a chemical attack or accidental release, a nuclear attack or accident. Under the provisions of the Bill, the government will make reimbursements for treatments of emergency cases.

However, the rates are low compared to the price and quality of the treatment. Protesting doctors wanted all these aspects need to be looked into, and demanded withdrawal of the bill, which they claimed was “unconstitutional” and would increase bureaucratic interference in the functioning of private hospitals. Several stakeholders such as the IMA and private hospitals called for a temporary roll-back to build consensus first. The latest development is that IMA and other groups representing private doctors have discussed and reached a consensus with the Government and called off the protests. As per a statement by the state chapter of the IMA, an MOU has been signed between the Government and stakeholders to exclude trust hospitals and those which have taken land free of cost/subsidized rates from Government, from the ambit of the Bill. Two IMA representatives will also be consulted if further changes are made in the rules.

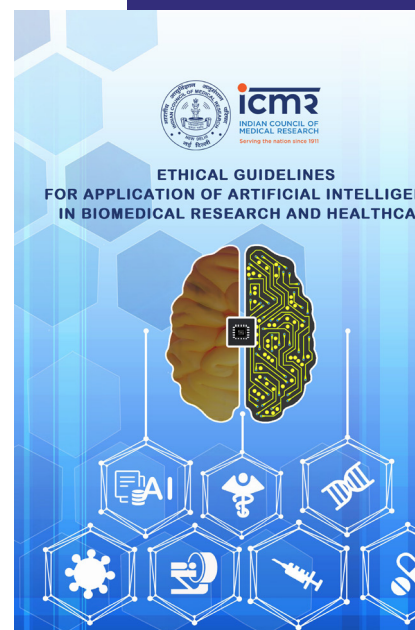


Photo: PTI

ICMR ANNOUNCES ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR AI IN BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH & HEALTHCARE

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) spreads its footprints in our lives, including healthcare, it is also becoming clear that its misuse can cause harm. In order to address possible misuse, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has recently released the first-ever set of ethical guidelines for the application of AI in biomedical research and healthcare. The guidelines aim to create “an ethics framework which can assist in the development, deployment, and adoption of AI-based solutions” in specific fields.

The ICMR outlined 10 key patient-centric ethical principles for AI application in the health sector for all stakeholders involved. These are accountability and liability, autonomy, data privacy, collaboration, risk minimisation and safety, accessibility and equity, optimisation of data quality, non-discrimination and fairness, validity and trustworthiness. Through these guidelines, the ICMR aims to:



01

Make “AI-assisted platforms available for the benefit of the largest section of common people with safety and highest precision possible”, and seeks to address emerging ethical challenges of AI in biomedical research and healthcare delivery.

02

Cater to all parties interested in researching AI in healthcare, such as creators, developers, technicians, researchers, clinicians, ethics committees, institutions, sponsors, and funding organizations.

03

Provide distinct sections in the guidelines that cover ethical principles for AI in health, guiding principles for stakeholders, the ethics review process, governance of AI in healthcare and research, and the informed consent process that involves human participants and their data.

04

Consider human oversight of the functioning and performance of the AI system, consent and informed decision making of the patient who must also be informed of the physical, psychological and social risks involved before initiating any process.

04

Address issues of safety and minimizing risk of data misuse, accessibility, equity and inclusiveness, standard practices to make the AI-based solutions technically sound, ethically justified, and applicable to a large number of individuals with equity and fairness.

These guidelines will be extremely useful for experts and ethics committees reviewing research proposals involving the use of AI-based tools and technologies.

WORLD TB DAY – RANGE OF INITIATIVES LAUNCHED BY PM AT **THE ONE WORLD TB SUMMIT 2023**



India has pledged to end tuberculosis by 2025, five years ahead of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target of 2030. Our PM, Shri Narendra Modi urged citizens to work collectively towards TB elimination in spirit of Jan Bhaagidari on a war footing and inaugurated the One World TB Summit 2023, in Varanasi to mark World TB day, 24 March 2023. Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Shri Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh, Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar, Union Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare, Dr V K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, Mr Emanuel Osagie Ehanire, Minister of Health, Nigeria, Mr Ethel Leonor Noia Maciel, Vice Minister of Health, Brazil, Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Regional Office and Dr Lucica Ditiu, Executive Director, Stop TB were also present at the summit. Many State governors, State health secretaries and NHM MDs from states joined online. The event, also attended by representatives from corporates, industries, civil society, NGOs, and TB Champions, reiterated India's commitment to eliminate the high-burden infectious disease by 2025, five years ahead of the global goal of 2030.

At the Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a range of initiatives to eradicate tuberculosis which included TB-free panchayats, pan-India rollout of a shorter three-month TB Preventive Treatment (TPT) and a family-centric care model for tuberculosis. He referred to the capacity and health infrastructure enhancement during the Covid pandemic as he underlined the high use of trace, test, track, treat and technology in the fight against TB. He said that since 80% of TB medicines are made in India, more and more countries could benefit from all such campaigns, innovations and modern technology of India. The PM also referred to the Ni-kshay Mitra campaign and said 10 lakh TB patients have been adopted by the common citizens. The financial support of these Ni-kshay friends for TB patients has reached above Rs 1000 crore.

The PM also launched the "Annual India TB Report 2023" which is a compilation of the country's efforts towards making India TB-free by 2025. According to the report, India saw a 13% increase in tuberculosis cases in 2022 compared to 2021. It said there was a brief decline in TB notifications in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) recorded a high notification of 24.2 lakh cases, an increase of 13% as compared to 2021. This translates to a case notification rate of approximately 172 cases per lakh population. Appreciating the contribution of healthcare workers who worked tirelessly for TB in spite of being repurposed for COVID pandemic response from time to time, he appealed them to continue the good work and asked them to adopt the same 5T approach (Trace, Test, Track, Treat & Technology) for TB as was done during the COVID pandemic.

INDIA GETS \$1 BILLION WORLD BANK BOOST FOR HEALTHCARE, PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

India and the World Bank signed two complementary loans of \$500 million each on March 3, 2023 to support and enhance the country's public health sector development. The Bank will support India's flagship Pradhan Mantri-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) to improve public healthcare infrastructure across the country through this combined financing of \$1 billion. One of the loans will prioritize health service delivery in seven states including Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Meghalaya, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh.

The \$500 million Public Health Systems for Pandemic Preparedness Program (PHSPP) will support the government's efforts to prepare India's surveillance system to be ready to detect and report epidemics of potential international concern, ensure rapid response, and prevent the emergence of pathogens. It is also expected to enhance India's capacity to detect pathogens, including zoonotic diseases, to inform India's bio-security response and commercialization of new technologies to prevent, detect or treat infectious diseases. Strengthen coordination and build institutional capacity of core public health institutions to implement the program and deliver high-quality results."



The second project, which is the \$500-million Enhanced Health Service Delivery Program (EHSDP), will support the government's efforts to strengthen service delivery through a redesigned primary healthcare model. This model includes improved household access to primary healthcare facilities, stronger links between each household and its primary care facility through regular household visits, and risk assessment of non-communicable diseases. Both the PHSPP and the EHSDP utilize the Program-for-Results financing instrument that focuses on the achievement of results rather than inputs.

According to the World Bank, India's performance in health has improved over time with life expectancy—at 69.8 in 2020, up from 58 in 1990. The under-five mortality rate (36 per 1,000 live births), the infant mortality rate (30 per 1,000 live births), and maternal mortality ratio (103 per 100,000 live births) are all close to the average for India's income level, reflecting significant achievements in access to skilled birth attendance, immunizations, and other priority services. However, the World Bank cautioned that despite these improvements, COVID-19 has underscored the need for revitalizing, reforming, and developing capacity for core public health functions, as well as for improving the quality and comprehensiveness of health service delivery.



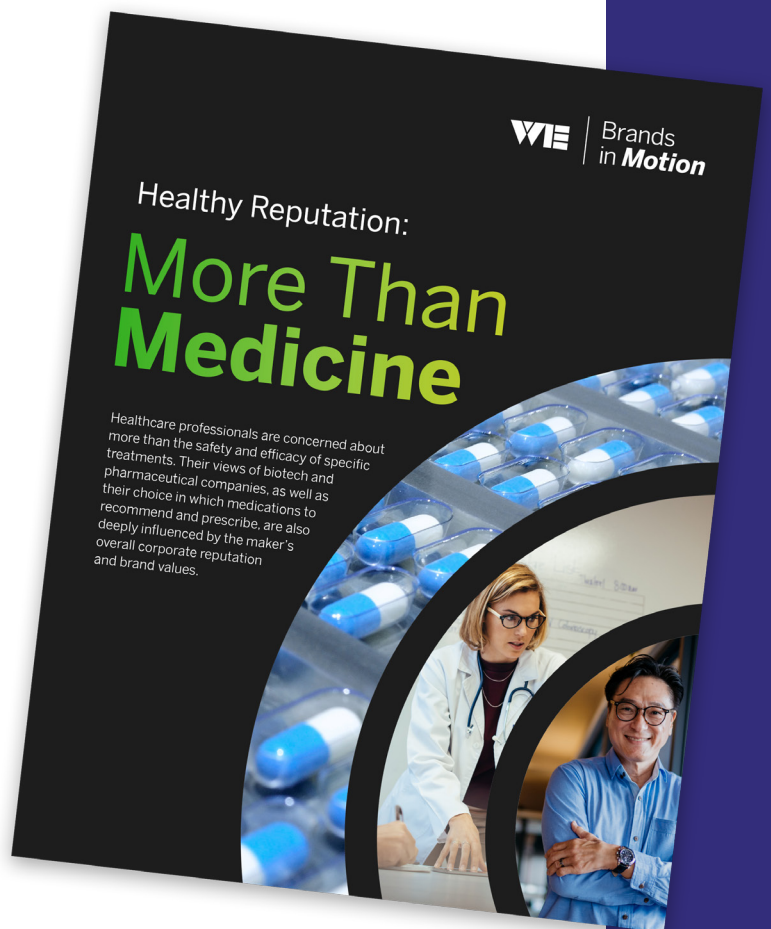
Photo credit: hindustan times!

WE BRANDS IN MOTION HEALTH WHITEPAPER, 'MORE THAN MEDICINE' LAUNCHED IN INDIA

The BIM Health whitepaper, 'More than Medicine' was launched in India on 29 March 2023 through Pulse Talk, podcast session organized by Avian WE in partnership with PRMoment. The podcast presented the key whitepaper findings and was followed by a panel discussion comprising Dr Usha Iyer, Director-Communications, Dr Reddy's Laboratories; Dr John Victor, Founder Reevin Mental Health; Dr Ratna Devi, Founder and CEO, Daksham Health & Education and Mr Brian Keenan, Head, WE APAC Strategy.

The whitepaper is based on a survey of 1100 healthcare professionals across 6 markets – UK, Germany, US, China, India and Australia. The survey objectives were to determine factors responsible for HCP perceptions of pharma and biotech companies; how this impacts the products they recommend and their expectations from brands to deliver beyond medicines. The findings revealed that across market – corporate reputation matters, this is an age of show and tell and while its important to keep health at the core, it is also expected for brands to go beyond. In India, particularly, HCPs want pharma and biotech companies to add value to society beyond the provision of goods and services. 79% of HCPs in India say that corporate reputation is very important to them. They believe HCPs must build corporate reputation via thought leadership, medical education and patient advocacy. Expectations of HCPs in India continue to be higher than the global average across every aspect of corporate reputation.

The panel discussion deliberated on issues related to the report and also be, such as the fact that patients don't want product related engagement but solutions. Reputation is beyond one product and represents what the company stands for. ESG initiatives can contribute to making the business more meaningful. Perception of pharma varies across markets, so it's important to study data and understand patient needs and views from varied aspects. During COVID, the information overload overwhelmed patients instead of empowering them. Patients today, both urban and rural want to know more, have a lot of questions and companies have a major responsibility to build a patient support programme. Overall, science and quality have to be solid as this is an era of innovation – and patients expect more than medicine, they want a better quality of life.



NATHEALTH SUMMIT PITCHES FOR ENHANCED PPP MODELS, DIGITAL HEALTHCARE AND ADDRESSING CURRENT BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

The NATHEALTH 9th Annual Summit - Arogya Bharat 2023 held on 22-23 March 2023 in New Delhi focused on collaboration, integration, and re-imagining to redefine the role of the private sector. NITI Aayog Member, Dr. Vinod Kumar Paul set the tone of the summit as he called for stronger public private partnership to reduce the disease burden in India, urged insurers to bring more people under the ambit of health insurance and highlighted the need to address current barriers and unlocking critical pathways to achieve universal health coverage.

The Summit saw extensive participation from the Government of India, leaders from hospitals, medical technology and diagnostics sectors, insurance, medical education, pharmaceuticals, global multi-stakeholder organizations, start-ups, and investors. The key highlights were an MOU signed between NATHEALTH and the Andhra Pradesh Government along with the release of key white papers on dialysis, health financing and a vision paper on digital health adoption through ABDM. It presented opportunities for businesses to network, collaborate through industry tie-ups on corporate partnerships and exploration of new business leads. It also aided in creating meaningful dialogue around medical value travel, health financing reform to facilitate the Universal Health Coverage (UHC), steps to scale digital health adoption in India, strategic pathways to boost medical education in India and deliberations on ways India can improve patient safety through education and empowerment. The panel themes also touched upon the shortage of healthcare professionals and the need for the skilling and upskilling of medical professionals. For the first time, a unique microsite as part of a special campaign on patient safety was launched at the event. A special session to recognize and felicitate best CSR Awards in healthcare and a startup innovation exhibition were other notable highlights at the event.



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