

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:289

ANSWERED ON:30.08.2013

DISTRIBUTION OF FREE MEDICINES

Hussain Shri Syed Shahnawaz;Joshi Shri Pralhad Venkatesh

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether high cost of health services has adversely affected the healthcare outreach in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the remedial measures taken by the Government in this regard;
- (c) whether the Government has envisaged distribution of free essential medicines in public facilities for reducing out-of-pocket spending on healthcare in the country during the 12th Five Year Plan and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether the Government has worked out the financial and operational modalities for the purpose; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and if not, the time by which it is likely to be operationalised in the country?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD)

(a)to (e): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 289 FOR 30TH AUGUST, 2013

Primary Health Care in India is provided free of cost in the public sector through a nationwide network of Community Health Centres (CHCs), Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and Sub Centres (SCs). Under National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), over 8,00,000 female Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) have been engaged who function as an interface between the community and the health system. However, out of pocket expenditure on health is high in secondary and tertiary health care. Nearly 70% of private health expenditure relates to Medicines.

Free care is provided for family welfare services HIV/AIDS, diagnostic and treatment services for major communicable and a selected range of non communicable diseases. "Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram(JSSK)", a new initiative under the National Rural Health Mission entitles all pregnant women delivering in public health institutions to absolutely free and no expense delivery including caesarean section. This initiative stipulates free drugs, diagnostics, blood and diet, besides free transport from home to institution, between facilities in case of a referral and drop back home. Similar entitlements have been put in place for all sick infants accessing public health institutions for treatment upto 1 year after birth.

The 12th Five Year Plan envisages that availability of essential medicines in public sector health facilities free of cost is critical if affordable healthcare is to be provided for the bulk of the population.

Public Health is a state subject; the primary responsibility of providing healthcare including free essential medicines rests with the State Governments. However, the State Governments are provided financial support under the National Health Mission, based on demands projected by State Governments, for overall health system strengthening including support for provision of free essential drugs in public health facilities. This support is subject to states setting up robust procurement and IT enabled logistic systems, quality assurance systems, having facility wise essential drug lists (EDLs), standard treatment guidelines and prescription audits.

Additional incentive up to 5% of state's total resource outlay is also available if the state has a clearly articulated policy for free distribution of essential drugs in public health facilities. More than Rs.1500 crores had been approved for drugs under NRHM in the year 2012-13. Rs. 1380 crores have been approved for drugs till date during 2013-14.