

Live Hindusthan

India continues to battle shortage of doctors

Acute shortage of doctors and paramedics continues to plague the Indian healthcare scenario. The worse shortfall is that of specialist doctors — surgeons, obstetricians and gynaecologists, physicians and paediatricians — at the taluka level. Sub-district hospitals or Community Health Centres (CHCs) at the taluka level suffer the maximum brunt of lack of infrastructure and shortage of human resources, Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare data shows.

While 22,496 specialists are required across India to run CHCs, only 11,910 or 47 per cent posts have been sanctioned. What is more shocking is that of the sanctioned 11,910 posts, only 4,156 posts are filled while close to 65 per cent posts are lying vacant. Providing safe healthcare at grass roots is impossible without specialist doctors who ensure timely surgeries of patients and ensure safe maternal and child health services.

Uttar Pradesh has the largest vacant posts (1,615) followed by Rajasthan (1,096) and Madhya Pradesh (1,056).

As against 33,968 sanctioned posts for doctors at Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) — which form the backbone of public health system, 27,124 posts are filled, while 6,844 posts are vacant. The largest number of vacancies are in UP (2,300), followed by MP (817) and Jammu and Kashmir (643).

In the absence of doctors, it is expected that the nursing staff will step in to relieve the patients. However, in a case of a double whammy, there is an acute shortage of nurses too at the PHC and CHC level. Of 77,956 sanctioned posts for nurses, only 70,738 were filled, while 7,218 posts remain vacant.

Also, diagnostics and imaging facilities in CHCs are mostly unavailable. Machines lay rusting in absence of technicians who can operate them. While there are 4,155 sanctioned posts for radiographers — technicians who operate imaging facilities like X-rays, there are only 2,129 posts that are filled. Up to 48 per cent posts of radiographers are vacant. While Rajasthan tops the list of vacant posts with 509 vacancies, Gujarat follows closely with 201 vacancies.

“Various reasons attributed for shortage of healthcare professionals in public health facilities, particularly in rural areas include overall shortage of healthcare professionals in the country, feeling of professional isolation among healthcare professionals, and unwillingness on their part to work in rural areas,” said a statement tabled in Lok Sabha regarding the issue.

MEDICAL VACANCY

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