

Number of doctors needs to be doubled from current 0.75 mn., nurses tripled from 3.7 mn., paramedics & technicians quadrupled from 2.75 mn. in 10 years

FICCI & AICTE work towards bridging the gap in healthcare domain to meet workforce shortage

NEW DELHI, July 14, 2012: The recent incident of a janitor performing a minor surgical procedure in a hospital has again triggered the debate on health workforce shortage in India. The emerging trend of 'task-shifting' was also brought into the spotlight by this event which means some of the tasks traditionally assigned to doctors can be passed on to nurses and those allocated to nurses shifted to other cadres. In this regard, the Government has initiated a move in rural areas under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) through ASHA (*Accredited Social Health Activist*) worker. It is also proposing the Bachelor of Rural Health Care (BRHC) for providing primary care in rural areas.

An analysis of the availability of healthcare human resources from the present bed capacity in the country and underlying demand for building additional capacity shows that the scenario is indeed alarming. In the next 10 years, the number of doctors needs to be doubled from its current figure of 0.75 million; nurses needs to be tripled from 3.7 million and the paramedics and technician assistants need to be quadrupled from the present number of 2.75 million.

The rapid technological advancement in the medical, diagnostic and management systems are creating the need for new skills. But there are limited formal training and education programs in the country. Large corporate and private hospitals run their own training programs for such requirements which are not standardized and do not have national recognition. This leads to constraining the career growth of individuals who opt to work in these fields, hence making the allied healthcare profession least attractive for youngsters.

To address this critical issue, FICCI has set up a Task Force led by Mr. Rajen Padukone, CEO, Manipal Hospital, along with other prominent industry members to improve the existing skill sets available in the country by identifying skill gaps and suggesting academic and training programs, related curriculum and appropriate training requirements.

For convergence and standardization of such training programs, FICCI is collaborating with All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to develop vocational courses in the allied healthcare domain. The courses have been tailored according to the seven levels under the National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) starting from grade IX of CBSE.

The framework allows lateral entry and exit and vertical mobility to students and promotes an all inclusive approach to vocational education. It also looks at skill development as a potent tool for empowering economically weaker sections. The practical training in hospitals is one of the fundamental elements of these programs, which is aligned with industry requirement.

For Paramedics and Allied Healthcare courses, an expert group is being led by Dr V Khole, Former Vice Chancellor, Mumbai University and Dr Arati Verma, Member, FICCI Skill Task Force in Health and Vice President - Health Sciences Education Initiatives, Max Healthcare.

There are 12 healthcare and paramedic course curricula submitted to AICTE, viz. Bachelor in Paramedical Technician (BPMT) in laboratory, blood transfusion, radiography, operation theatre, endoscopy, neurology, anesthesia and critical care, medical health records, emergency medical services, renal dialysis, cardiology and optometry. All the courses are competency-based modules and are open to revisions to ensure that the curriculum is guided by needs of the industry.

The 12 courses will be soon notified on AICTE's website and will be open to be taken up by the industry and educational institutes. Educational institutes such as schools, colleges and polytechnics will work in partnership with the skill knowledge providers like hospitals and laboratories to scale up the number of trained technicians in the country.

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