

## Experts call for \$150 B investment for universal healthcare access in India

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### To roll out a universal healthcare model through an autonomous body for reimbursing healthcare without ceilings and limits



At the Best of ASCO 2024 Conference, recently held at The Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai, Dr B.S. Ajaikumar, Founder and Executive Chairman of HealthCare Global Enterprises Ltd, along with a distinguished panel of healthcare experts, announced plans to submit a landmark proposal to the Indian government.

This proposal calls for an estimated \$150 billion annual investment aimed at revolutionising India's healthcare infrastructure and ensuring universal access to high-quality healthcare for its 1.4 billion citizens. The \$150 billion figure is a projected estimate and will undergo vetting based on further assessments.

Dr Ajaikumar remarked, "What purpose would a nation's economic progress serve if the majority of its citizens are deprived of quality medical treatment? The government has a critical role to play in bridging this rich-poor gap of healthcare."

A key issue raised during the session was how the government could ensure equitable healthcare delivery.

Dr Ajaikumar urged it is high time we asked some pertinent questions. Majority of head and neck cancers, observed, are extremely difficult to treat and worse, they have a high tendency of recurrence. Only immunotherapy and targeted therapy can ensure a definitive and lasting treatment and minimise recurrence to the extent possible. But a larger section of the population is deprived of this value-added care which leads to higher mortality and higher disease recurrence.

In addition to advancing treatment access, banning tobacco could significantly reduce the burden of head and neck cancers.

The only way to counter this sticky challenge is to roll out a universal healthcare model through an autonomous body for reimbursing healthcare without ceilings and limits. The government can become a monitoring agency to evaluate the approvals and outcomes. As more and more drugs become generic, the cost of healthcare will come down progressively, which will create a conducive environment for introducing standardization of care across the length and breadth of the country.

The experts at the conference called on policymakers to collaborate closely with industry leaders to integrate real-world

insights into healthcare reforms. Universal healthcare in India is not just an ambitious goal—it is a vital necessity to ensure equal treatment for all citizens, irrespective of their financial background. The proposed \$150 billion annual investment, while subject to further vetting, is seen as a feasible and necessary commitment in a \$4 trillion economy to achieve this vision.

Experts agreed that significant reforms are the need of the hour to address the gaps in India's healthcare system. The upcoming proposal will include detailed financial models showing that, with the right investments and policies, India can effectively meet the healthcare needs of its population while becoming a global leader in healthcare space.