

“Industry has to understand importance of CSR”

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Given the situation in India, where the majority of people in low income groups are deprived of the healthcare facilities, how can industry contribute in the Corporate social responsibility (CSR) activity?

The government is there to make a policy but industry has to understand its responsibility. Under the Companies Bill 2011, the CSR spending would be the responsibility of companies. Firms having Rs 5 crore or more profits in the last three years have to spend on social activities. One of the major proposals is that companies have to mandatorily spend two percent of their average net profit for CSR activities. However, the industry has to understand the importance of CSR activity all by themselves and contribute immensely.

What kind of role is being played by your organization in making healthcare affordable?

The focus of the government has been on the various diseases of importance. Apart from more common diseases such as diabetes, we have also started focusing on the hypertension, coronary diseases and all types of cancers such as oral, cervical and breast. We have granted funds for district level centers for the purchase of mammography instruments and blood sugar monitors. One district has close to 200 sub centers that are being adopted by our department.

In what way government can shoulder responsibility with industry in creating more awareness on non-communicable diseases?

We have already adopted that approach. In fact, in one such instance, we called up the pharma companies such as Lupin, Cipla and Cadila and asked them to make the same combination for a vital drug, leading to considerable reduction in price. Under national leprosy eradication programme (NLEP) even one of the top leprosy drug manufacturing company, Novartis in partnership with our department, distributed the drugs free in the whole country. Generally for the DOTS (directly observed treatment, short-course) programme, one has to go to the chemist and has to pay. But now there is software that will

generate a token number when the name will be put on the website. The patient can then get the drug free on showing the token number. The seller is paid back in six months time.

What is the long term policy in tackling non-communicable diseases?

Our policy is focused around the states, which have been neglected so far. The states such as West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chattisgarh are under our preference for such initiatives. The proper assessment of the ground situation is important as that will reveal the needs of the communities in the respective regions. I believe that there should be demand based technology.

What are the major challenges before the policy makers?

The main challenge in India is the presence of non-awareness about diseases among the population. People don't know about the basic details on diagnostics and preventive treatment. Even the educated people also take things very easily. They are supposed to get themselves checked at the regular intervals.

**Dr Jagdish Prasad was awarded padma shree in 1991 in recognition of his pioneering work done on economizing healthcare technologies in cardiology.*