

“Will raise healthcare issues in the Parliament”

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Besides being a social activist, Mrs Meenakshi Lekhi is a well-known Supreme Court lawyer and one of the key spokespersons of Bharatiya Janta Party. She defeated Mr Ajay Maken of Congress from the prestigious New Delhi seat in the recent Parliament elections. Read on for what transpired when she was interviewed by *BioSpectrum*:

Q: What do you intend to do for strengthening the healthcare system as a part of policy making?

I would like to set up a health network of key stakeholders because whatever we discuss at the public forums has to be translated and implemented as policies. Now as an MP and as a representative of my constituency, I am supposed to play a huge role in framing and implementing policies. Therefore, I am very ready to raise these issues in the Parliament. In India, huge number of human resources is wasted due to lack of skills and at the same time there is a dearth of enough healthcare manpower in rural areas. While a lot of money has to be spent on training, the awareness is equally important.

Q: How can we increase health spending?

It is not just spending; we can talk about preventing in a big way. We can revise it and we can use different methods. I think prevention is the best way to save on cure. Treatment of diseases is a priority but preventive diagnosis is an important tool.

Q: How important is sensitizing politicians about the issues?

As a politician, we have to travel as lot and even we suffer on account of food habits leading to stress. I agree that we have to present an example before people and must be aware of such issues. The sad thing is turning down a person when somebody from a poor background walks into my office and asks for help to treat diabetes. Unfortunately, I cannot sponsor what are called lifestyle diseases. From my funds, I can sponsor cancer treatment. We can have policy framework to create funds. There I do need support from a corruption free process to establish that. May be it can be linked to the AADHAR card.

Q: What about reaching rural areas? What is the way forward?

If one has a genetic make-up that makes you susceptible to it, then you cannot just wait for getting into you and then do the treatment. The lifestyle changes and prevention could surely play a major role in preventing it. Since it is a lifestyle disease, it has to do something with our eating habits. We need to discuss this in the Parliament and I am willing to move ahead.

I personally feel the need for people to be sensitive to such issues. There needs to be changes in policy and it must be linked with other polices perhaps Jan Dhan Yojna. Solution lies in digital literacy and management. I am ready to lead the case of health programmes but it has to show results. However, my knowledge though is superficial and it would be better if experts come up with new ideas. I would be always a supporter of such causes.