

Govt drug supply scheme under scanner

13 August 2013 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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It its latest report, the parliamentary panel attached to the health ministry has claimed to have come across several complaints about the quality of drugs supplied to the beneficiaries under central government Health Scheme (CGHS) and called for an efficient mechanism to assure the quality of drugs and system of procurement.

According to the report, "The committee has received a number of complaints from the beneficiaries regarding the poor quality of medicines and near expiry date drugs being supplied in the Wellness Centres, the possibility of counterfeit and spurious drugs finding their way to the distribution system of medicines through CGHS, and other Government agencies and also certain unscrupulous elements in the CGHS system siphoning off CGHS supplies for sale through chemists."

"In view of a large number of complaints regarding the quality aspect of the drugs supplied to the beneficiaries the committee observes that there is an imperative need for an efficient mechanism of quality assurance of the drugs supplied through CGHS," it said.

"The quality of the medicines is the bedrock for health care services and if it gets compromised, it will erode the credibility of the whole health care delivery system. The Committee accordingly directs that suitable measures be taken to ensure that only good quality lab tested drugs are supplied to CGHS beneficiaries," the panel said.

The committee also takes note of the procedures laid down for timely availability of medicines to the beneficiaries but fails to understand as to how the desired benefits are yet not reaching the beneficiaries. The dismal state of availability of medicines was brought to the notice of the committee by the beneficiaries through written submissions as well as through oral submissions, according to the panel report.

"The Committee feels that the key gap lies in the absence of close and sustained supervision of day to day arrangement for indenting, procurement, storage, and distribution of drugs in Medical Store Depots and within CGHS. For this purpose, the

Committee would emphasize that the Department should review the system to streamline and revamp it so as to remove the delay in supply of medicines," the report said.

In its response to the panel, the Health Department informed that they are planning to make certain identified lifesaving drugs part of the formulary so that they can have rate contract and the stocks will be adequate to be supplied to the beneficiaries on case to case basis.

"The committee observes with concern that the whole process of buying medicines from empanelled chemists is time consuming and difficult as the number of chemists in panel within the specified radius is very less. The Committee, therefore, recommends that at least three chemists should be included within the specified radius of concerned CGHS Dispensary to make it convenient for the beneficiaries," the report said.