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Mr. C K Mishra underlines the need to invest in primary healthcare during the inauguration of FICCI Heal 2017

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FICCI HEAL 2017 brought together and provided an interactive platform for communication to industry leaders, healthcare providers, government officials, policy makers, health insurance companies, and various media players.

Inauguration of eleventh edition of FICCI HEAL was done on the theme “Indian Healthcare: A Patient’s View” by Mr. C K Mishra, Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India. He underlined the need for investing two-thirds of the spending in primary healthcare and enhancing preventive care to keep the requirement of diagnostic care and admission to hospitals in check. “As financial resources are limited, it is essential to invest in the right place for optimal results”, he said.

Mr. Mishra said that infrastructure in remote areas was weak and only government establishments were functional in such places; therefore active private sector participation was needed to make quality and affordable healthcare accessible to all.

He said that the new National Health Policy 2017 with the three pillars of accessibility, affordability and quality of care are in line with a patient’s needs. He added that there was a need to customize care and value the choices of a patient.

Recognizing FICCI’s efforts in the health care space, Mr. Mishra said that the industry had been forthcoming with policy and reform suggestions, which enabled the government to strengthen its policies. He urged FICCI to develop a framework in conjunction with the government to step the country’s healthcare delivery system.

On the occasion, Mr. Mishra released a Knowledge Paper ‘The healthcare consumer: Understanding expectations & experiences in the patients journey’ prepared by FICCI in collaboration with KANTAR-IMRB. The report is based on interviews with over 5000 patients pan-India from both public and private hospitals. Some key findings show that 61% of the patients rated their overall experience in private hospitals positively as compared to 45% for government hospitals. The report delves on the experiences and expectations of the patient and provides recommendations for the government and healthcare providers.

Mr. Pankaj Patel, President, FICCI, said that the government’s intent to increase the public health spend to 2.5%, efforts should be made to increase it to 4% of GDP to meet the universal healthcare goals of the country. He added that long-term financing options from banks are still not available to healthcare providers and this was hampering the penetration of private healthcare in the country. He said that while retention of healthcare services in the tax exemption list under the GST regime is thoughtful and will enable flow of seamless tax credit and improve overall tax compliance, the services rendered by the hospital are exempted from taxes, several input services are subject to GST, which will result in increase in overall cost of care for the patient. Mr. Patel said that FICCI assures the government, its complete support for achieving affordable, accessible and quality healthcare to all Indians.

Sharing a patient’s perspective, Mr. M Damodaran, Founder Chairperson, Excellence Enablers P Ltd & Former Chairman, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), said that care, patience, dignity and empathy are the four key words that stakeholders must understand to appreciate a patient’s needs. Referring to Gorakhpur tragedy, he said that it is a wake-up call for all and it is time to take stock of the situation and find solutions.

Mr. Damodaran said that there is a need to recognize and reward skilled workforce such as the nursing staff to enable them to render quality services. Challenges would always be there but the need is to find and deliver the best in such situations and not settle for sub-optimal services. He added that while there is a demand to increase outlays for healthcare, it must be understood that outlays do not result in outcome; what is required is action and execution.

Mr. Rahul Khosla, Chair-FICCI Health Services Committee; President, Max Group & Chairman, Max India Ltd., said that healthcare financing is a huge issue. Healthcare is a sector with infrastructure status, and needed low cost financing options. This will enable creation of last mile connectivity. Besides, there was an acute shortage of skilled manpower and capacities. The need is to build new capacities and re-vitalize existing capacities. He added that there was an urgent need for the government and stakeholders to work collaboratively.

Mr. Varun Khanna, Co-Chair-FICCI Health Services Committee and Managing Director, BD India, delivered the vote of thanks. Also, on the dais was Mr. Ashok Kakkar, Co-Chair-FICCI Health Services Committee; Sr. MD, Varian Medical Systems International India Pvt. Ltd. Ms. Shobha Mishra Ghosh, Assistant Secretary General, FICCI, moderated the session.