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FICCI suggests way forward through a 4 Pillars Medical Devices Policy

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FICCI has suggested the Government to adopt a 4 pillar balanced approach while drafting the policy to assure the sustainable growth of this nascent industry



FICCI recently hosted Department of Pharmaceuticals' day long workshop on Draft National Medical Device Policy.

It was attended by several other medical device stakeholders and senior Government representatives. FICCI has suggested the Government to adopt a 4 pillar balanced approach while drafting the policy to assure the sustainable growth of this nascent industry.

Prioritizing on Universal Health Care Access: FICCI strongly proposed that a careful evaluation based selection be made on manufacturing of certain targeted medical devices that can fit the current Indian manufacturing skills and manufacturing ecosystem, along with prevalence of disease that they address, and that the Government facilitates local manufacturing of them in a targeted manner towards the Make In India Program. FICCI suggested that targeting all complex medical devices for Make In India will neither find success nor will make healthcare cost effective in the country. The current consumption levels of medical devices in India at $3 per capita is far lower than the $50 to $70 per capita consumption of China, Brazil and Russia, thus making Make in India a challenge. Universal Healthcare Provision, by significantly enlarging India's healthcare market from its currently abysmal 0.8 beds per 1000 population will expand the supply side market size of medical devices.

Focusing on export promotion, rather than purely seeking import substitution: Since it is proven that the world over medical device is a global supply chain, as evidenced by the fact that even China is more than 70% import dependent in this sector, FICCI suggested that the Government focus on building India's global medical devices export competitiveness without seeking to curb imports. Importing low volumes of high quality and novel medical devices will facilitate market adoption, and scale the Indian market, which will eventually benefit domestic manufacturing to acquire both skill and scale. If this strategy is not adopted, India will have to direct far larger resources towards novel innovation, for which both funds and medical research capability is currently in short supply.

Adopting a sub-segmented policy approach for medical devices: FICCI observes that, in the absence of a cogent policy, currently all medical devices are treated the same from a policy standpoint. Since both technology and market adoption vastly varies from such low risk devices as a syringe, I.V. catheter or a blood bag, to high risk – high complexity devices as pacemakers and equipment such as MRI machines, FICCI urged the Government not be make a blanket un-segmented policy. The policy should acknowledge the sub-segmentation of medical devices into simple engineering and complex engineering, and apply distinct policy treatment, wherever applicable.

Facilitating an innovation centric approach: As the medical device is a fast innovation driven industry, it will be of utmost importance for the Government to promote an innovation ecosystem approach. This can be driven by keeping innovative devices outside price control, scaling currently abysmal number of innovation incubators such as School of Biodesign to several such institutes, and launching a fiscal incentive mechanism for attracting top global medtech innovators to India.

The workshop witnessed Department of Pharma leading the dialog and discussion under the able Chairmanship of Secretary Jai Priye Prakash.