

Urgent Need for a Serious Divide in Health Care

Illness and injury is inevitable at times in life requiring medical care for its treatment and cure. However, only a small proportion of the population suffers from any illness at a point in time. This tiny proportion of the population consumes vast proportion of the total health expenditure of a nation. On the other hand each one of us need health care in the form of preventive measures, starting from antenatal care during pregnancy followed by supervised delivery and care of the mother and the baby in the most vulnerable period of postnatal care. This is followed by care of the Under-5s through growth monitoring, immunisations for prevention of a number of deadly diseases and psycho-social monitoring of the children during growing period right through to adolescent. As adults, the state of our health is largely dependent on the life style we lead. Needless to say that poor dietary habits, lack of physical exercise, recreation use of drugs, including smoking and alcohol and taking unnecessary risks are some of the evils which bring about ill health to many of us in life. Most of the expenditure on health care is due to the hospital treatment and use of drugs, both for inpatient and outpatient care. Not much is left for the preventive measures and what little is allocated for it is not spent efficiently.

We all know that the cost of medical care at individual as well as at national level is escalating prohibitively as we read this article. Many of us delay the treatment or miss it altogether because of the cost. The situation is worsened when there is a widespread fear of malpractice and unnecessary treatment in medical profession, both through unnecessary use of medication and interventional procedures. Recent NDTV programme highlighting corruption in India's Health Care Sector, "Healers or Predators" broadcast on 16 July 2018 is a good example.

At personal level, the other day, my wife in spite of my advising her not to do so, went on to see a doctor for sore throat and cough and came back with six medications, none of them were indicated in her viral infection. Irony is that the doctor did not even bother to look into her throat or check her lungs. Cost was not an issue to both parties as my wife was covered under a medical insurance scheme. Another friend of mine related his experience of his wife's pregnancy and delivery. More than once, during antenatal checks, she was advised to have abortion because of some *fake* problem with the pregnancy. Luckily they ignored the advice, although under great stress, but the pregnancy progressed uneventfully. Again, during labour they were advised that she needed a caesarean section during delivery otherwise it could be harmful for the mother and/or the newborn. Fortunately they ignored the advice again and baby was born spontaneously without any problem and the mother and the baby continued to be fine.

Are we at the crossroads for a divide between *illness care* and *preventive medicine*? Although the two sides of the same coin, I think the two need to be separated. All preventive care should be borne by the state and free of cost. Whilst the illness care remain in the hospital domain and strictly monitored under carefully drawn rules and regulation. Universal care for all preventive measures will improve the health of the populations and reduce the burden of chronic diseases, improving the quality and longevity of life. UK's National Health Service has demonstrated this method of care for maternal and child health and the elderly, but it should be extended throughout life.

Ref: [Samiran Nundy](#), [Keshav Desiraju](#), [Sanjay Nagral](#). Healers or Predators? Healthcare Corruption in India. 29 June 2018.

Discussion on the article is encouraged. This page will continue to discuss these issues in future

articles.

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