

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE
AT THE FOUNDATION DAY OF THE POST GRADUATE INSTITUTE
OF MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, DR. R.M.L. HOSPITAL**

New Delhi: 25-02-2014

1. It is indeed a privilege for me to be present here amidst you for the Foundation Day celebrations of the Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital. I am also glad to have the opportunity to see so many young doctors, who have received their post-graduate (PG) degrees today.
2. Dr. RML Hospital is a premier medical institute, which has been in the service of humanity for over eight decades. From a humble beginning, this Hospital has now evolved into a state-of-the-art tertiary care facility. From 50 beds in 1954, its in-patient healthcare today comprises over 1,200 beds.
3. The PGIMER was established on this day six years back. It was set up to develop PG-level medical education and to produce specialists in different medical disciplines. From 28 PG and 2 super-specialty seats, it now has 101 PG and 25 super-specialty seats and is known for its academic excellence. I compliment the faculty and management for its stupendous progress in a short span of time and urge them to continue working hard.
4. It is heartening to note that the Institute has some grand plans for the future. A new super-specialty block and additional super-specialty courses have been envisaged. These will raise academic standards further, and at the same time, benefit large number of patients. I look forward to an early realization of these initiatives.

Dear young doctors:

5. I congratulate all of you on receiving your PG degrees today. This degree is a dividend of the nation's investment in you. It has empowered you to contribute to the society; to touch and transform the lives of people. Remember that patients do not visit hospitals on their own volition. They do so when circumstances warrant them to. They go with an unflinching belief in being cured by the marvel of

modern medicine. Be the torchbearer in mitigating their sufferings. Your zeal to serve people must be unwavering always.

6. In this temple of learning, you have been introduced to frontline medical technology. You have participated in the investigation and treatment of challenging ailments. During your training here, you have had the opportunity to learn the mysteries of the human body. As you receive this honour today, I am sure you feel indebted to all those suffering people who became your blackboard.
7. Good health, as an attribute of human well-being, precedes every other possession of mankind. Many years ago Lord Buddha observed and I quote: "To keep the body in good health is a duty... otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear" (unquote). A healthy population exhibits a greater disposition towards seeking education, acquiring knowledge and accessing employment opportunities. Their health is a true reflection of a country's progress.
8. A healthcare system resting on the essential trinity of availability, quality and affordability is a *sine qua non* of a developed country. In India, extending the circumference of our country's health coverage has been a long-drawn endeavour. In 2005, the National Rural Health Mission was started to take healthcare to the doorstep of the rural population through a network of sub-centres, primary health centres and community health centres. Better infrastructure, trained manpower, effective drugs and modern equipments have improved service delivery. This mission has now been extended to the urban areas.
9. Yet, a world-class healthcare system eludes the common man. Its reach to the last mile is not free of hassles. The quality of healthcare delivery is found wanting at times. These limiting factors have led many people to rely on costly medical treatment offered in the private sector. High medical expenses can cause a setback in the lives of poor people. Patients with economic difficulty should not stand denied of proper medical care. In this context, I want to underline the need for health insurance mechanism to work effectively to provide relief to people during medical emergencies. Under the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana, beneficiaries are entitled to cash less in-patient treatment. This facility should be comprehensive and made available for primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare. We should ensure its benefits covering every poor of the country.

Friends:

10. Technology is the *messiah* of modern-day world. Path-breaking initiatives in different fields have the imprint of cutting-edge technology. In healthcare, technological applications have brought about a silent revolution. The telemedicine project using satellite technology has helped establish linkages between health centres in remote areas and super-specialty hospitals in urban areas, and facilitated expert healthcare consultation reaching the needy and under-served.
11. A technology-led health sector will make efficient provision of services possible. Healthcare is a potential hotbed for technological pursuits. Discovery of better formulations, indigenous production of sophisticated medical equipments, and development of nutritional and disease surveillance mechanisms are areas that call for innovative research. I am sure our medical scholars and researchers and development centres are ready for this challenge.
12. For India to progress; to be reckoned as one of the leading nations in the world, we have to build our soft power. And for that, the need to invest adequately in human capital is any layman's guess. Public expenditure on health in India is 1.2 per cent of GDP, much lower than the 4 per cent plus levels in countries like US, UK, Australia, Norway and Brazil. To enhance people's capabilities by ensuring health and nutritional security, the expenditure levels have to rise. The private healthcare providers also have to be encouraged and suitably engaged to provide quality healthcare services.
13. Augmenting public resources will not automatically translate into expansion of health infrastructure unless there is adequate number of competent healthcare professionals to serve in this sector. There were about 241 medical professionals – physicians, dentists, nurses, pharmacists and other professionals – per one lakh population of India at the end of the Eleventh Five Year Plan period. It is envisaged to increase this density of medical professionals to 354 by the end of the Twelfth Plan period. Expansion of medical education infrastructure deserves top priority. Introduction of new medical schools and capacity augmentation of existing ones is necessary. In this context, it is gratifying to note that six AIIMS-like institutions have been started.
14. The faculty is the custodian of medical education. All concerned with the management of the medical discipline has to undertake faculty development with ceaseless energy. Advances in medical sciences occur at lightning speed today. Our medical schools have to continuously up-grade their syllabi and frequently review the horizon of their research activities.

Friends:

15. The medical occupation is associated with piety. It is a unique blend of science and humanity. Healing the sick; nursing the bedridden, are posited as God's own work carried out through your hands. You are often placed on the same pedestal as divinity. You must respect the sacred trust that people have reposed in you. You must be ever-willing to comply with the demands – of sheer hard work and sacrifice – of your profession. You must always remember the true meaning of the Hippocratic Oath you took on entering this noble profession. Reputed medical institutions like yours have a duty to develop a humanistic approach in the young doctors and orient them towards a value-based career in medicine. I hope that you all will remain firm in your conviction to the higher objective of selfless service to society. I wish you all success in life and career. I also wish the doctors, faculty members and others working in this Institute good luck. With these words, I conclude.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.
