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TOPIC: HEALTH

The need for universal and equitable health coverage

India's Progress in Tuberculosis (TB) Care

Key Achievements in TB Care

- Rapid molecular testing for quicker detection of TB and drug-resistant TB.

- New shorter, all-oral treatment (BPaLM) for drug-resistant TB.

- Monthly nutrition support under Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana (NPY) increased to ₹1,000.

- TB preventive therapy rolled out to prevent disease spread.

- TB survivors and Champions playing a bigger role in spreading awareness.

Impact of These Measures

- TB incidence reduced by 17.7% (from 237 to 195 per 1,00,000 population between 2015 and 2023).

- TB-related deaths reduced by 21.4% during the same period.

Integration of TB Care into Public Health System

- TB services historically run through vertical programs like NTEP.

- To achieve universal health coverage (UHC), TB care must be integrated into a broader health system.

Decentralization of TB Care

- Ayushman Bharat scheme integrates TB care into two key components:

  - AB-PMJAY: World's largest insurance scheme.

  - Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AAMs): Health and wellness centers for primary healthcare.

- Benefits of decentralization:

  - TB patients can test at AAMs.

  - Access to treatment closer to home.

  - Community health officers trained to refer weak TB patients early.

Challenges in Private Sector TB Care

- 50% of TB patients seek care in the private sector, leading to:

    - Delayed diagnosis.

    - High out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE).

- Strengthen referrals from private to public healthcare for free, quality treatment.

- Full insurance coverage for TB treatment under AB-PMJAY is needed.

Steps to Achieve Equitable TB Care

1. **Strengthening Person-Centered Care**

    - Targeted interventions in states for tribal, migrant, and homeless communities.

    - Need for investment in healthcare infrastructure and resources.

2. **Recognizing Intersectionalities in TB Care**

    - Addressing factors like gender, age, caste, disability, and socio-economic status.

    - Gender-responsive approach introduced to address disparities.

3. **Providing Integrated Healthcare**

    - TB care combined with screenings for diseases like COPD, asthma, depression, and hypertension.

    - AI-powered X-rays and molecular tests to improve early detection.

4. **Reducing Financial Burden on Patients**

    - NPY helps reduce financial strain through nutrition support.

    - '100 Days' campaign aids early detection, reducing OOPE.

    - Future steps: extend nutrition support to families, introduce wage-loss schemes, and create livelihood programs for survivors.

5. **Spreading Awareness and Reducing Stigma**

    - Public awareness campaigns to improve TB knowledge.

    - Educate communities about drug-resistant TB and antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Conclusion

- India's TB response sets global standards in treatment, prevention, and care.

- Ensuring equity in healthcare is key to accelerating TB elimination and achieving UHC.

Source: https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-need-for-universal-and-equitable-health-coverage/article69365827.ece