

Experts laud inclusion of NCDs in national health policy

04 March 2015 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

Experts laud inclusion of NCDs in national health policy



With NCDs contribution to mortality in India expected to increase from 53 percent in 2008 to 73 percent by 2030, the health policy analysts across India feel that the efforts to tackle have to be stepped up in a big way.

While lauding the inclusion of NCDs for the first time in the draft National Health Policy 2015, it is being termed as a formative step towards achieving the vision of healthy India. The health experts emphasized that it is important to have a result-oriented action plan, with specific focus on awareness and early diagnosis, systematic approach to NCDs, healthcare financing, and training and development of healthcare workers and paramedical staff.

Underlining the need for an integrated action plan for NCDs in India, Dr Kenneth Thorpe, the chairman of the Partnership to Fight Chronic Diseases (PFCD) said, "NCDs are the major cause of mortality in India. Building and strengthening primary healthcare network with a focus on disease screening, prevention, risk-factor control and health promotion should form the rudimentary structure of the integrated action plan to reduce morbidity and mortality associated with NCDs."

He further said that the training and development of healthcare workers in primary setups as well as healthcare financing are equally critical for effective implementation of the action plan.

The PFCD, a global organisation committed towards raising awareness and finding sustainable solutions on NCDs, has been working in coordination with the medical fraternity, policy makers and patient groups to identify the challenges and draw an action plan.

Apart from taking its toll on health, NCDs also affect productivity and economic growth. A recent study by the WHO has found that nearly 26 per cent of the population in India are at the risk of dying young (30-70) from one of the four main NCDs. Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) form a major share of NCDs, while chronic respiratory disease, cancer and diabetes also constitute a major share. Moreover, increased vulnerability of ageing population to NCDs is resulting in economic stress on

both the private households and government.

Dr. Anand Krishnan, Professor, Center for Community Medicine, AIIMS - New Delhi said, "India is facing a serious threat from NCDs. A lot has been said and recommended when it comes to preventing and controlling the continuously growing burden of NCDs. It is crucial that both the government and private sector should adopt a unified approach and work in close coordination to identify effective solutions and reduce NCDs burden. Now it is high time that the government should frame strong policies and guidelines, and at the same time create a framework and infrastructure to execute them efficiently, in order to deal with the growing burden."

A unique combination of disease-specific insurance products, medicines, innovative technology and lifestyle changes can be very beneficial in thwarting the challenge posed by NCDs.

The strengthening of primary healthcare network is one such critical area where government needs to focus on in order to ensure the success of its action plan. Moreover, the promotion of mainstream alternate therapies like ayurveda, yoga and naturopathy can also result in providing cost-effective management of NCDs, as these conditions require lifelong management.