

The Telegraph

Ayush centre in hunt for docs

Bhubaneswar, Aug. 26: The Ayush centre at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) is ready, but there are no doctors to run the facility.

The Union minister for health and family welfare Jagat Prakash Nadda had inaugurated the centre for ayurveda, yoga, unani, siddha and homeopathy (Ayush) on March 26.

AIIMS director Ashok Kumar Mahapatra told The Telegraph that they had recruited three doctors in ayurveda and unani in June, but they were yet to join and asked for more time.

"The centre has five sanctioned posts of which we had advertised three. We gave appointment letters to three medical officers. Once they join, the centre will start functioning," said Mahapatra.

When asked why they were struggling to find people for the centre, the director said: "The main reasons that make doctors reluctant to join government-run health care institutions are salary and basic services. Many are opting for private hospitals because of the services and better salary. We can recruit them, but we can't force them to join."

A senior AIIMS administrator said they had proposed to recruit five medical officers in ayurveda and homoeopathy at the new Ayush centre. "We had conducted a massive recruitment drive in August last year. We had advertised 110 posts, of which only 80 have joined. We had selected three for the Ayush centre, but none has joined," said the administrator.

The facility, which spreads over an area of 3,000sqft on AIIMS premises, is supposed to provide services to both in-patients and outpatients. It is designed to have 30 beds. It was initially planned to have inpatient facility for ayurveda and outpatient wards for homoeopathy. But later the plan was expanded for other disciplines such as yoga, unani, and siddha.

"At present, there is a surge in demand for Indian medicines as it invites less complication compared to their allopathic counterpart. However, in the absence of

proper Ayush service, many people still prefer allopathy to ayurveda or homoeopathy. I hope the service is received well," said Upendra Nath, a patient attendant at AIIMS.

In 2014, the institute had recruited three yoga trainers on contractual basis to provide yoga lessons to the patients. However, due to a decline in demand, the administrators had stopped the services. "We have restarted the yoga training at the new Ayush centre. The hospital receives 2,000 patients every day. If 200 of them could be diverted to the Ayush centre, the workload could be lessened," said the institute director.

An ayurveda doctor Harihar Panigrahi, who runs a clinic in Old Town, said that the demand for ayurveda and homoeopathy medicines was increasing rapidly and it was evident from the success of a popular ayurvedic brand launched by a well-known yoga guru.

"The state government through its separate Ayush directorate is doing its bit to popularise the Indian medicine system. This should also been done by institutes such as the AIIMS," said Panigrahi.

Recruitment of staff, especially doctors, has been a long-standing problem of the AIIMS since its inception in here in 2012. In March, the institute recruited 87 doctors, but there was none for ayurveda or homoeopathy.