

Odisha has Shortage of Doctors

SAMBALPUR: EVERY year, about 1,000 students clear MBBS. While about 50 per cent opt for higher studies, others prefer jobs in private sector.

For some it is dissatisfaction with work environment while for others it is monetary reasons. Whatever the reasons, the corporate sector has been luring freshers while Government has been doing little to improve infrastructure and pay.

This has led to more than 2,000 vacancies in State-run hospitals leaving healthcare in a comatose. To meet the shortage of doctors, the Centre had increased the retirement age to 65 from the present 62 from May 31 to retain the experienced hands for a longer period.

Despite frequent agitations by doctors, the State Government is yet to take any visible step to restore confidence among the new batches of medical graduates. Instead, introduction of Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) has terrorised the physicians. ESMA was introduced to ensure that they do not abstain from duty since a section of them launched a stir in 2009.

The medical graduates are averse to joining State Government as the corporate sector provides them with modern infrastructure, higher monetary package and less administrative hassles. This leaves the State Government with about 25,000 doctors for a population of 4.5 crore.

Delayed promotions: After 22 years, Dr Raj Kumar Barpanda, Surgery Specialist, was declared a Specialist. Another senior, Dr Jayanarayan Nanda, joined and retired as Assistant Surgeon, which speaks about neglect towards the sector.

Doctors are crying hoarse over non-introduction of concrete transfer policy or Dynamic Assured Career Progression (DACP), which ensures assured transfer and promotion within a specified time-frame. Although DACP has been implemented in 14 States, Odisha Government has adopted dilly dallying tactics.

While WHO suggests that doctor-patient ratio should be 1:24, Medicine Specialist Manoj Nanda said he had been treating 544 patients per day in Kalahandi.

Transparent transfer policy: Citing that doctors posted at places like Capital Hospital are never transferred, the community has been demanding a transparent

transfer policy. This, they said, would ensure rotation and those in interior pockets would not feel victimised.

Two cardiologists, Nandu Panigrahi and Mahendra Tripathy, had joined Government service and were posted in PHC.

With their specialisation going unrecognised, they opted for private hospital where they have carved a niche for themselves. On the other hand, there is a section of doctors who have pursued and completed super-specialty at the cost of the State Government but preferred to join private sector.