

450 Pharmacist Posts vacant in Tamilnadu

Pharmacists employed in government sector are seeking amendments to the Pharmacy Act as their role as dispensers of medicine has changed considerably.

Government pharmacists in the country have been holding meetings for a few months to press their demands. Though diploma is the qualifying degree to enter government service, they remain a neglected lot. Their role and duties have changed significantly in the last 50 years with the increase in patient load and the number of drugs dispensed.

“The health sector has expanded and there are more patients in hospitals than there were in 1960. At that time, a pharmacist would handle 25 patients and there were only five or six drugs. But pharmacists now handle 500 to 600 drugs and even taluk hospitals receive at least 300 patients daily,” explains Viswanathan Thankachan, training coordinator of Kerala State Pharmacy Council.

Among the States, Kerala has done well and pharmacists had managed to establish a council and enjoy six promotions during their service period. In contrast, in Tamil Nadu a pharmacist can look forward to only two promotions. In Karnataka the pharmacists cannot aspire to any promotion, pharmacists say. By implementing Section 42 of Pharmacy Act of 1948, the government would be able to address all their grievances. The section deals with dispensing of drugs by unregistered persons. Such persons could be arrested up to six months and be fined Rs. 1,000.

Though the government has launched several immunisation programmes, it has not filled the vacancies for pharmacies in primary health centres, says K. Rajaram Pandiyan, president of Tamil Nadu Government Pharmacists’ Association. The norm of one pharmacist to 75 beds as per the State medical code and 1:100 outpatients is necessary, they say.

Around 200 PHCs do not have even a single pharmacist and there are 450 vacancies across Tamil Nadu. The State has nine regional vaccine centres but there is a pharmacist only for the Chennai centre, says N. Raj Ganesh, secretary of the association.

On Sunday, pharmacists from Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu met in the city.