

Recently MPPSC recruits 740 doctors having shortage of 1235 doctors

Lack of facilities at hospitals has plagued the state for long. According to the NRHM's Mission statement (2005-2012), Madhya Pradesh is one of the 18 high focus states where inter-state and inter-district disparities including unmet needs for public health infrastructure need to be addressed. Director of health KL Sahu talks to HT on recent incidents of medical negligence and shortage of doctors.

There have been several incidents in the past few months where people have died due to want of basic medical facilities or wrong treatment. What do you say?

In the Indore incident where ants ate into dead bodies of two children at the district hospital, a doctor and four paramedical staff members were suspended. The Damoh incident is basically an NHM issue. We have asked EMRI (Emergency Management and Research Institute) why they didn't tell us if any equipment was not working in the ambulance. The deputy director of health visited the district and he has submitted his report. If there is any fault on anybody's part, he would be punished.

Don't you think government hospitals have failed to provide treatment to people and that is why people prefer private hospitals for treatment?

One cannot find as much competence in private hospitals as we have in government hospitals. The government is making efforts to equip hospitals with all the resources as well. If the treating doctor or physician's attitude is positive, there would be no problem in hospitals. However, if a doctor is reluctant, then problems occur. Recently, when a lady doctor didn't turn up in Bhind, another doctor treated the patient on time. A doctor's job is to provide timely treatment. But if a doctor doesn't make any effort, it comes under the category of negligence and we take action in such cases.

There is a severe shortage of doctors in government hospitals. What do you say?

Recently, there was an advertisement of MP Public Service Commission regarding recruitment of 1,235 doctors but only 740 doctors could be recruited.

Will opening of new medical colleges solve the problem of shortage of doctors?

This is basically a medical education department issue. There are three government medical colleges and four private ones coming up. It will take some time. However, raising infrastructure for the medical colleges is not enough. They will need teaching staff and also the recognition from medical council of India. Without MCI recognition, which is linked with number of doctors and facilities, the medical colleges cannot run.

What shortcomings in the department need to be addressed?

There is an HR issue. There is sufficient paramedical staff on regular and contract employment. We have a good number of specialists. There are certain vacant posts of

medical officers which we are trying to get filled through Public Service Commission. We are conducting walk-in interviews on contract posts under National Health Mission (NHM) every Wednesday.

There is a wide gap between health facilities in urban and rural areas. Comments?

We have enough infrastructure in place up to the block level but there is an issue relating to working of the doctors. They join their duties in rural areas and then they stop going. Recently, we removed 250 such doctors. If we don't take such action, the posts will remain filled (on paper) and new doctors cannot be recruited.

What do you think of the budget for the health department?

We have a budget from the state government as well as the budget under National Health Mission. But there is definitely a shortage of doctors.