Universal Health Coverage Day 2024 Dialogue

Universal Health Coverage for All: Promoting Ethical, Transparent, and Value-Based Healthcare through Multi-Stakeholder Collective Action

Emphasizing the Crucial Role of Governments, Business Associations, and Patient Organizations in Ensuring Ethical Healthcare for All

12th December 2024 | 01:00 – 03:00 PM

Background / Overview

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day, observed annually on December 12, highlights the importance of accessible, equitable, and resilient health systems that leave no one behind. In alignment with this global commitment, UN Global Compact Network India (UN GCNI) organized a high-level virtual dialogue to promote transparency, accountability, and value-based healthcare systems in India.

Recognizing the growing importance of ethical and inclusive healthcare practices, this event brought together key decision-makers from the government, business associations, and patient organizations to explore collaborative approaches to making healthcare more transparent, people-centric, and equitable.

Rationale

While significant strides have been made toward achieving Universal Health Coverage, gaps persist in delivering ethical, affordable, and quality healthcare to all, especially marginalized populations. Multi-stakeholder collaboration is vital to bridge these gaps. This dialogue aimed to reinforce the role of cross-sectoral partnerships in promoting healthcare integrity, improving governance structures, and empowering patient voices.

Objectives

- To foster a dialogue among healthcare stakeholders on strategies for ethical and value-based healthcare delivery.

- To highlight the roles and responsibilities of government, patient organizations, and business associations in strengthening healthcare systems.

- To promote integrity, transparency, and accountability in healthcare governance and service delivery.

- To encourage multi-stakeholder collaboration for advancing UHC goals in India.

Goal

To promote a collective vision for equitable and ethical healthcare systems in India by engaging diverse stakeholders and aligning efforts toward the achievement of Universal Health Coverage and the broader Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being).

Key Highlights and Insights from the Dialogue

Moderator:
Dr. Somnath Singh, Deputy Director, UN Global Compact Network India, set the context and steered the dialogue through pertinent themes, emphasizing ethical governance, patient-centricity, and collaborative action in healthcare.

Distinguished Speakers & Insights:

Dr. K. Madan Gopal, Advisor – Public Health Administration, NHSRC, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India

Dr. K. Madan Gopal shared an insightful perspective on the government's approach to strengthening ethical and equitable healthcare systems in India. He emphasized the centrality of robust public health architecture, integrated service delivery, and the need for digital transformation in healthcare to achieve Universal Health Coverage. His remarks highlighted how governance reforms and capacity building at all levels are pivotal for ethical healthcare delivery.

Key Insights:

- The government is focusing on integrated, resilient, and decentralized healthcare systems to improve accessibility and affordability.

- Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (AB-HIM) is a game-changer in building infrastructure and workforce capacity across districts.

- The National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) is driving transparency, efficiency, and patient empowerment through digital health records and e-services.

- Emphasized the importance of value-based governance and ethical leadership in public health administration.

- Advocated for cross-sector partnerships and decentralized models to ensure sustainable, community-driven healthcare.

- Highlighted the need to embed ethical norms in public procurement, service delivery, and performance audits.

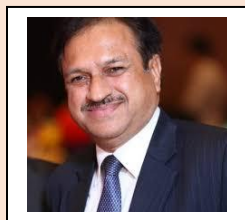**Dr. Navin Nishchal,** Chairman, Voice of Healthcare (VoH)

Dr. Navin Nishchal brought forward the patient organization's perspective, underscoring the necessity of embedding patient-centric values in healthcare governance. He stressed that achieving UHC must go beyond infrastructure and financing—it must ensure that patients' voices, rights, and experiences are integrated into policy-making and service delivery frameworks.

Key Insights:

- Healthcare systems must prioritize patient-first approaches, focusing on empathy, dignity, and patient safety.

- Strong need for institutionalized mechanisms for patient feedback, engagement, and grievance redressal.

- Emphasized health literacy as a critical tool for empowering patients and enhancing demand for quality care.

- Urged for inclusive policy frameworks that involve patient representatives in health governance bodies.

- Advocated for developing a national patient engagement strategy to promote ethical, participatory health governance.

- Called for a shift from disease-centric to holistic, people-centric healthcare models that address social determinants of health.

Dr. Jatinder Singh, Deputy Secretary General, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry
(Business Association)

Representing the business sector, Dr. Jatinder Singh highlighted the role of the industry in fostering ethical business conduct and advancing responsible healthcare practices. He emphasized that achieving UHC requires business associations to align with ethical standards, environmental sustainability, and transparency in their operations. His inputs focused on the integration of ESG principles in healthcare systems and business governance.

Key Insights:

- The industry must adopt responsible business conduct frameworks that prioritize ethical supply chains, patient safety, and transparency.

- Advocated for collaborative partnerships between business, government, and civil society to ensure equitable access to quality healthcare.

- Stressed the importance of value-based procurement policies and anti-corruption mechanisms within healthcare systems.

- Highlighted the role of business associations in capacity building, compliance, and standard-setting in healthcare delivery.

- Recommended integrating ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) practices into healthcare business models to enhance accountability and resilience.

- Encouraged innovation and investment in sustainable healthcare infrastructure and digital solutions to strengthen system preparedness.

Key Recommendations

- **Strengthen Ethical Governance Frameworks:** Institutionalize value-based principles in healthcare policy and practice through improved transparency, audit systems, and compliance standards.
- **Enhance Patient-Centric Mechanisms:** Create more formal platforms for patient engagement, grievance redressal, and policy participation.
- **Promote Collaborative Models:** Foster public-private-civil society partnerships for health service delivery and innovation.
- **Scale Health Literacy Initiatives:** Support digital health literacy, community health education, and awareness of entitlements and rights.
- **Embed ESG in Healthcare Business Practices:** Encourage the healthcare industry to adopt Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks to improve social responsibility and ethical conduct.
- **Leverage Digital Health Technologies:** Promote digital health tools for transparency, efficiency, and accessibility in care delivery.

Way Forward

UN GCNI aims to continue facilitating multi-stakeholder platforms and policy dialogues to strengthen ethical healthcare ecosystems in India.

Future interventions will include:

- Thematic roundtables on integrity in healthcare supply chains.

- Development of a Healthcare Integrity Charter involving key stakeholders.

- Strategic collaborations with business associations and patient organizations for awareness campaigns, capacity building, and joint advocacy on UHC.

Conclusion

The Universal Health Coverage Day 2024 Dialogue provided an invaluable platform for collective introspection and actionable discourse on ensuring equitable, ethical, and accountable healthcare in India. The insights and commitments from key stakeholders pave the way for a stronger, more inclusive healthcare future.

The session witnessed overwhelming participation with over 1200 attendees from diverse sectors, including healthcare professionals, industry leaders, academia, government officials, development organizations, and civil society representatives. The high level of engagement reflects the growing interest in ethical healthcare governance and multi-sectoral partnerships.