Tackling doctors’ shortage

Lack of physicians and healthcare infrastructure is acute in rural areas. We need to learn from our failures and ensure course correction.

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As part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), India committed to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC). However, the total healthcare expenditure (under five per cent of its GDP) resulted in sub-optimal outcomes. With less spending, India faces a severe shortage of healthcare infrastructure and talent along with regional imbalances in healthcare delivery. Although rural India accounts for about 70 per cent of the population, it has less than one-third of total hospital beds, doctors and nurses, resulting in large disparities in health outcomes across states.

India’s healthcare system faces multiple challenges, of which a major one is the shortage of doctors. The government has emphasized the need to increase the number of doctors on par with other developed countries. However, the lack of proper infrastructure and facilities has been a major roadblock in the way of healthcare provision.

A report by the National Health Mission (NHM) states that there are only 150,000 doctors in India, whereas the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a ratio of 1 doctor per 1,000 people. This shortfall has been recognized as a major challenge in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The government has taken several steps to address this issue, including increasing the number of medical seats in medical colleges and universities.

However, the situation is different in rural areas, where the shortage of doctors is even more acute. According to a report by the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), there are only 3.5 doctors per 10,000 people in rural areas, while the target is 1 doctor per 1,000 people.

The government has also taken steps to improve the infrastructure of healthcare facilities in rural areas. The government has launched several schemes to improve the infrastructure of healthcare facilities in rural areas, including the Ayushman Bharat scheme, which aims to provide primary healthcare services to the rural population.

Despite these efforts, the shortage of doctors in rural areas is a severe challenge that needs to be addressed. The government needs to focus on increasing the number of doctors in rural areas and improving the infrastructure of healthcare facilities to ensure that everyone has access to quality healthcare.

Source: National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)