Ensuring Universal Health Coverage

What is the issue?

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- India is facing deep public distrust and despair over health care in private and public sector hospitals.
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- Universal Health Coverage must provide a framework in which the issues of access, quality and cost can be integrated.
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What are the problems prevailing in public health care?

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- Access to readily reachable, trustworthy and affordable health care is a major challenge before poorly served rural areas and overcrowded urban areas.
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- There is an inadequacy of organised primary health services compounded by a weakness at the intermediate level of care in many district hospitals and nursing homes.
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- Corporate hospitals boast of high quality advanced care and compete with each other for a significant share of medical tourism, they are mostly inaccessible to the rural population and the urban poor.
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- Government institutions of advanced care suffer from low budgets and a lack of managerial talent.
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How India can attain Universal health coverage?

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- Three major issues are involved in assess health care is access, quality and cost.
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- The UHC provides the framework in which all three elements can be integrated.
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- **Assess -**The pathway to improving access lies in expanding the network of public sector facilities at all levels.
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- This calls for higher levels of public financing, improved management through the creation of a public health management cadre.
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- These measures have been envisaged in the National Health Policy, 2017 and need urgent and earnest implementation.
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- **Quality -** This is promoted through audited insistence of all service providers who enter this system, and cost is controlled by the negotiating power of the single payer.
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- **Cost of care -** It is a major challenge in a system where patients and families have to bear the burden.
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- The solution lies in doubling the level of public financing to at least 2.5% of GDP by 2019, rather than 2025, as proposed in the National Health Policy.
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- This can be ensured by pooling tax funding, all Central and State insurance schemes and employer-provided health insurance into a “single payer system”.
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Source: The Hindu

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