

The odds against NHPS

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- The government has launched the 'National Health Protection Scheme' (NHPS), which envisions a massive coverage of 50 crore people.

\n

- But previous experience shows us that merely constituting an insurance scheme will do little to enhance health care.

\n

\n\n

How have previous insurance schemes fared in India?

\n\n

\n

- **Design** - Any public health insurance scheme would logically enhance medicare affordability for the masses, which will consequently enhance demand.

\n

- But as Indian public health infrastructure is still in shambles, the supply would have to be met through expansion of private health infrastructure.

\n

- **Previously** - Public insurance schemes like Centre's 'Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana' (RSBY), and Andhra Pradesh's AarogyaSri had been in operation.

\n

- Both RSBY and AarogyaSri were cashless hospitalisation schemes, but they benefited few and failed to reach the most vulnerable sections.

\n

- Notably, outpatient care, which accounts for the most of the out-of-pocket spending, wasn't covered under the scheme.

\n

- **Challenges** - While both targeted people living below the poverty line, over-reliance on private hospitals and poor monitoring watered down their impact.

\n

- This was because, private infrastructure tends to be concentrated in more

prosperous regions (increased distances make accessibility tough).

\n

- Some hospitals were found to have performed unnecessary medical procedures on patients, to derive monetary benefits from the schemes.

\n

- Notably, such nefarious designs damages the health parameters and also increases out-of-pocket expenditure (in travel and other accessories).

\n

- The lack of surety of reimbursements has also resulted in some hospitals charging money from the patients despite the insurance cover.

\n

\n\n

What needs to be done?

\n\n

\n

- Considering the poor success of the previous schemes, some have even argued that mere demand oriented interventions by the government are futile.

\n

- Unless the public health systems can compete with the private for funds from insurance scheme, quality healthcare will continue to elude the vulnerable.

\n

- Also, it is important to develop monitoring systems to ensure that private hospitals registered under the scheme comply with the norms prescribed.

\n

- Streamlining reimbursements to hospitals and efforts the expansion of both private and public health facilities at newer geographies are needed.

\n

- Hence, while the NHPS looks massive in terms of coverage, it needs to comprehensively take these factors into account to be successful.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering