

PMO pushing to ramp up poor doctor-patient ratio

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: India's abysmally low doctor-patient ratio – one doctor for 1,953 people, or a density of 0.5 doctors per 1,000 population coupled with acute shortage of nurses and health delivery personnel – has now got the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) worried.

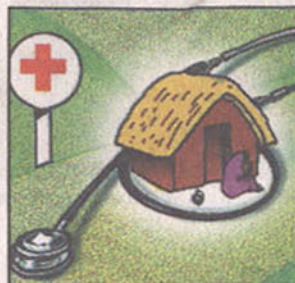
The PMO is pushing for an early introduction and passage of the National Commission on Human Resources in Health (NCHRH) bill in Parliament.

It has asked the Union health ministry to work towards "strengthening of public health through creation of necessary human resources capacities at all lev-

els." It has also backed the creation of a Public Health Cadre in the 12th five-year Plan.

The Planning Commission's high-level expert group (HLEG) recently suggested the setting up of a Public Health Service Cadre that would be responsible for all public health functions starting at the block level, and going up to state and national levels.

The PMO said in a statement recently, "Building human resources for health by producing adequate number of doctors, nurses, auxiliary nurse midwives other paramedics in vital. In this regard, the ministry may work towards getting the NCHRH Bill passed by Parliament



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early."

HLEG says in 2011, India had 6.12 lakh registered allopathic doctors. It will take the nation at least 17 more years before it can reach the World Health Organization's recommended norm of one doctor per 1,000 people. The HLEG has predicted the availability of allopathic

doctors to one doctor per 1,000 people by 2028 that can be achieved by setting up of 187 medical colleges in 17 high focus states during the 12th and 13th Plan.

Union health minister Ghulam Nabi Azad recently also said that 3,000 Indian doctors have migrated abroad in the past three

years.

A health ministry official said, "The parliamentary standing committee for health is examining the bill and are expected to submit their comments within three months. We hope to table it in the next Parliament session."

NCHRH Bill aims to create an overarching body that will have Medical Council of India (MCI), Pharmacy Council of India (PCI), Nursing Council of India (NCI), Dental Council of India (DCI) and proposed Central Councils for Paramedical and Allied Medical Sciences Education under it.

The council will be headed by a secretary-general who will hold the office for a

fixed term of three years. She/he will have five separate councils under it, each dedicated for categories like medicine, dentistry, nursing, pharmacy and paramedics.

"The paramedics' council will cover lab and imaging technicians and physiotherapists," said a ministry official. On Monday, Azad said increasing human resources in health is the ministry's top agenda.

"In order to increase the availability of human resources, a number of initiatives have been taken by the ministry as a result of which, 46 new medical colleges have been established just in the last two years raising the number from 289 to 335 at present," Azad said.