

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE
AT THE INAUGURATION OF AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
THORACIC SURGEONS AND INTERNATIONAL CORONARY
CONGRESS (AATS ICC 2016) MEETING**

New Delhi: Nov 12, 2016

1. I am indeed happy and consider myself privileged to be present amidst you this morning for the inauguration of the Second International Coronary Congress. It is my privilege because I am speaking as a layman in the midst of so many experts present in this hall.
2. Cardiovascular diseases are a leading cause of deaths globally. Among cardiovascular diseases, Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) has the largest stake in taking lives of the people. Coronary arteries carry blood and oxygen to the heart. Therefore, a disease which affects the coronary arteries deprives the heart of oxygen, leading many a times to heart attacks. The precious assets of our nation – the young population - are becoming increasingly vulnerable to CAD and heart attacks. By 2020, India may account for 60 percent of the world's heart patients. In gearing up to meet such an eventuality, a lot of responsibility lies on the shoulders of cardiac specialists like you.
3. The First International Coronary Congress was held in New York last year. As mentioned by Dr. Trehan, the scientific content and discussions have provided clarity in decision-making in relation to complex coronary artery diseases. The discussions here, I am quite confident, will enrich your clinical experience in daily practice. I compliment you all for being part of this forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

4. Healthcare is a priority area to our country. However, the challenges at meeting the healthcare requirements are acute in the case of developing economies with large populations. Doctors have a responsibility to work on creating greater awareness about prevention and treatment among the general population. The most common cause leading to CAD and heart attacks are wrong lifestyle choices. Hence, precautionary strategies have to take centre-stage in the fight against heart diseases. Our healthcare

sector has to be equipped to not only treat people but also guide them about prevention of medical conditions.

5. The rural and urban poor are more susceptible to health problems due to poor access to healthcare, high cost of treatment and lack of awareness. They also tend to ignore early signs of such diseases as seeking treatment might mean missing on wages. We have to make an effort to bring such population in the treatment loop. You all should think and work towards a mechanism where the poor has access to super specialty diagnosis and treatment.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

6. This international conference, to my mind, is a great platform where steps necessary to strengthen our healthcare system into one that is universally accessible, affordable and effective can be discussed. To build such a system, we require not only a robust healthcare infrastructure, but also trained and motivated personnel. We can study the systems prevalent in other nations that have turned successful in providing treatment to their entire population. Having said that, our country is unique on account of the size and geographical spread of our population. We have to develop suitable solutions to meet our requirements.
7. In this regard, I want to state that the fusion of ICT with medical science has enormous potential in meeting the challenges of healthcare delivery in rural and remote areas. Blending technology can also aid education, training and management in health. The range of technology application in healthcare is immense. From a simple telephonic discussion of the medical problem of a patient to a complex platform where diagnostic tests and consultation with specialists are performed, IT based solutions offer a ray of hope in overcoming physical distance in medical treatment. Tele-cardiology has made good progress in the past few years. It is helping patients in remote regions to get timely and expert reports, leading to correct diagnosis and proper treatment. But there is scope for refinements. This forum should take up these issues, discuss their feasibility, and find solutions to problems that might occur during implementation. With your concerted effort, the gap between rural patients and urban facilities can easily be bridged.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

8. While universal health coverage is a challenge many countries are still grappling with, more and more patients are looking for simpler therapies to improve their quality of life. This has led to the rapid growth of alternative medicines worldwide. Recognizing that a unitary medical system alone will not suffice the health needs of a huge population, India has adopted a pluralistic healthcare system. This approach is also based on the fact that every medicinal system exhibits strength in remedying specific lines of ailments. The allopathic system of medicine should explore complementarities with other systems in fighting diseases and medical conditions.
9. The insightful minds in front of me and the cardiac specialists round the globe have an arduous task at hand. They have to work towards the aim of 'a healthy heart for everyone'. They have to develop innovative platforms for not only treatment but also prevention of heart diseases. The concept of "Heart Team", where the best management for a patient is decided under one single roof, is appealing. Your efforts should be directed at such unique models of giving customized treatment to each and every individual.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

10. The medical profession is an occupation that is a noble mix of knowledge and compassion. It empowers you to lend a helping hand to the society at large, to touch and transform the lives of people. Curing the sick and healing the bedridden are considered God's own work carried out through your hands. The society admires you for your selfless endeavours. The faith that people repose in you is sacrosanct and has to be respected at all times. I hope that you all will remain steadfast in your conviction to the higher objective of selfless service to society. I congratulate you for your achievements and wish you success in your future endeavors. Let me now conclude with these words of Mahatma Gandhi:
"It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver".

Thank You.

Jai Hind.
