

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE AT THE GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS OF  
JAWAHARLAL INSTITUTE OF POSTGRADUATE  
MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (JIPMER)**

**Puducherry: September 26, 2014**

1. It is a happy occasion for me to be here this afternoon for the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER), which is one of the top medical institutes of our country. I thank you for inviting me to be a part of this historic event.
2. I am glad to use this occasion to visit Puducherry again, after a year. It is a fascinating city with beautiful boulevards and placid promenades. It is a sheer delight to witness the rich architecture of its buildings. This place is associated with Sri Aurobindo, who established an Ashram that has followers from around the world. Puducherry is also linked to revered Tamil poets: Bharathidasan, who was born here; and Subramania Bharathiar, who chose this place to write some of his memorable poems.  
  
Ladies and Gentlemen:
3. On this significant occasion of Golden Jubilee of JIPMER, I compliment the entire fraternity of this Institute. I am told that as part of the year-long celebrations, JIPMER has conducted national and international conferences and workshops; held a marathon to focus on eradication of tuberculosis; and launched initiatives like the Emergency Disaster Management Centre. It also has plans to hold medical camps and exhibitions, and community interaction programmes. I wish you a smooth completion of these activities.
4. Though JIPMER is fifty years old, the origin of this institution can be traced back to 1823 when a medical college called École de Médecine de Pondichéry was established by the French Government. After the transfer of Pondicherry to India, the Government of India took over the college and named it Medical College Pondicherry. It was thereafter called Dhanvantari Medical College for a short period. Upon its up-gradation to a regional post-graduate institute, it was re-named JIPMER in 1964. It became an Institution of National Importance in 2008.

5. JIPMER has made rapid progress in recent years. With over 40 academic departments, including over 20 post-graduate courses and 8 super-specialty programmes, this medical school caters to a wide spectrum of medical education. The establishment of crucial facilities - a 360-bed Super-Specialty Block, a hundred-bed Emergency Medical Service and Trauma Care Centre, a 76-bed Regional Cancer Centre, and a 400-bed Women and Children Hospital - has rendered this premier Institution a privileged responsibility in the sphere of healthcare. Its persistent drive to expand is noteworthy and I congratulate all those associated with these endeavours.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

6. Good health is mankind's foremost possession. Without it, one suffers from incapacity in accessing good education, in seeking employment opportunities, and in leading a decent life. Lord Buddha had said and I quote: "*Health is the greatest gift, contentment the greatest wealth....*" (unquote).
7. In India, we have the largest young population in the world, with over fifty per cent of our population below 25 years of age. By 2020, the average age of an Indian will be 29 years, as compared to 37 years for a Chinese or an American. The proportion of working age population is likely to be 64 per cent by 2021. This demographic dividend is for our taking, provided we have a healthy and educated population.
8. A holistic healthcare system - universally accessible, affordable and effective – is the need of the hour. It calls for a strong healthcare infrastructure, trained and motivated personnel, and access to medicines and modern equipments. There are 7 hospital beds per 10,000 population in India, compared to 23 in Brazil, 38 in China and 97 in Russia. There are 7 physicians per 10,000 population in India, compared to 19 in Brazil, 15 in China and 43 in Russia. Though schemes like the National Rural Health Mission have improved service delivery in India, health services are still constrained by its reach and quality. Primary healthcare is critical as it reduces the need for tertiary care. Public financing for healthcare in India is less than one percent of the world's total health expenditure. As Indians are a sixth of humanity, this is woefully meager. Our expenditure levels have to rise significantly to ensure universal health coverage.

9. 'Health for All' is a maxim that needs to be put into practice immediately. Most developed nations of the world have proficient healthcare systems to take care of the medical needs of its population. We need to study these systems without blindly following them. Our country, due to its sheer size, population and diversity, has to follow a model that best suit our needs. The power of technology has to be utilized in a meaningful way in the health sector. The tele-medicine project, which uses satellite technology, connects remote health centres with super-specialty hospitals for expert consultation to reach the needy and under-served. India is a global leader in information technology. We should require no further prodding to put in place such innovative solutions to take care of the medical needs of our vast population.
10. I am told that the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has embarked upon formulating a new health policy. Our immediate aim should be to eradicate communicable diseases and control the non-communicable ones. In my Address to the Joint Session of Parliament in June this year, I had announced that tertiary healthcare would receive renewed focus. I am happy to note that JIPMER will be the first amongst medical institutions where new Schools of Public Health are going to be set up.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

11. Some medical treatments are expensive. But, that should never translate into denial of cure to any, including the poor. In India, out-of-pocket expenditure comprises 86 percent of private expenditure on health. Due to lack of financial risk protection, many in our country plunge into poverty fighting ailments and bearing high costs of treatment. A strong health insurance mechanism is the key. As per a survey, over 300 million people in India are covered by health insurance. This number has been projected to rise to 630 million, or a half of the population, by 2015. I hope that the National Health Assurance Mission, which has been envisaged, will help bring more and more people under the health security net.

12. A holistic approach to healthcare is necessary. Due to the increasing trend of lifestyle-related diseases, precautionary strategies have become important. Prevention of medical conditions calls for proper counseling. Healthy living has to be fostered from a very young age. 7 percent of the world's children are obese or over-weight. Obesity in childhood can lead to health complications later. Balanced diet, physical activity and lifestyle management have to be promoted. Special interventions are necessary for newborns as the first four weeks of life, during which 44 per cent of deaths of children below five years occur, are crucial. Life-saving medicines and procedural expertise have to be available far and wide. Hygiene and sanitation also play an important role in preventing the occurrence or spread of diseases. I am hopeful that under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, we would be able to cover every household by total sanitation in the next five years.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

13. Health research is a much-neglected area in our country. Research is essential for the development of medical interventions necessary to maintain good health by the people. Development of sound systems of medicine requires translation of knowledge gained in other disciplines. It has been demonstrated how knowledge from aviation, automation and robotics can be used for optimizing healthcare. Medical research has to be, therefore, a culmination of multi-disciplinary effort comprising varied fields like medical electronics, systems biology, biotechnology, genomics, mathematical simulation and information and communication. JIPMER should aim to enrich its research-based publications, go for patent filings, and develop models addressing common health problems by integrating Indian Systems of Medicine.

14. We need researchers, with talent and integrity, to work in our institutions. Researchers have to fully understand what innovative solutions are required in various branches of healthcare. At the same time, research findings have to be implemented on the ground rather than being confined to the academic sphere. It is, therefore, crucial to strike close collaborations between researchers and policymakers.

15. To be counted as one of the developed nations in the world, we have to create a 'healthy' India. The latitude for discretion is less. We have to act now, and fast. JIPMER has a profound role to play in this endeavour. True to your mission, which is 'to see the smile on the face of the poor', I am sure you all will be the ambassadors of change, and measure your success by the smiles you bring in the millions of our countrymen in the years to come. With these words, I conclude. I once again wish all of you the very best.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

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