



Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, Delhi

Health for All - Now!

Health is a Basic Human Right!

Press Statement

by JSA Delhi on Denial of Healthcare to Critical Patients and Sudden Discharge from Hospitals without Alternate Arrangements

April 09, 2020

There are media reports that patients from three hospitals under the Delhi Government -- Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital (LNJP), GB Pant and Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality -- were asked to vacate at a short notice. We are hearing from patients that many of them had to leave without any alternative arrangements of admissions. Many of these patients were admitted in ICUs and are in need of critical care. Only few of the discharged patients could get alternative admissions and the rest were left without healthcare. At least one death has been reported as a patient.

In his press conference on 7th April, 2020, the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had designated the above mentioned hospitals as dedicated hospitals for COVID-19. The total bed capacity of these hospitals comes to nearly 1800 beds. GB Pant and Rajiv Gandhi are tertiary care super speciality referral hospitals. Most of the patients admitted there would have exhausted other options in the public health sector. They need to be urgently admitted to alternative public hospitals equipped to provide critical care at the earliest.

As on 8th April, Delhi has 547 active COVID positive cases out of which a certain fraction would need critical care. Prof of Public Health, JNU, Dr. Ritu Priya opined "The public health system needs to be prepared for an increasing number of cases well in advance. That does not mean *patients have to be vacated with such urgency without making alternative arrangements for their care*. This is epidemiologically unwarranted, and unethical.

While Advocate Ashok Agarwal strongly stated that "*such denial of health services by the government would be tantamount to violation of human rights*", Dr. Vikas Bajpai, a professor and public health activist, condemned the step and said that this is "*an attempt to abdicate state responsibility towards citizens in the guise of a public health emergency*".

"While it is important to provide best possible care for COVID patients, it cannot be on the cost of several other needy patients, compromising both ongoing and emergency care that they are entitled to" assert Raman VR, National Convenor, Public Health Resource Network.

"Public hospitals should be taking full responsibility of the patients, identify alternative hospitals and beds for them and arrange ambulances to transport them. There is an existing



Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, Delhi

Health for All - Now!

Health is a Basic Human Right!

system of free beds available in the private sector. Why were such provisions not utilised?" asks Dr. Vandana Prasad, a leading public health activist and community paediatrician.

"Just like the government has dedicated Covid hospitals, there needs to be transparency on where people should go for regular non-covid needs. Right now patients are being shuttled from one hospital to another, some are even walking to hospitals due to lack of transport in the lockdown. Some OPDs are functional with altered timings but this is not known publicly. Patients are turned away by security guards and do not even get to talk to a medical practitioner." Laments Dr Sonali Vaid, public health expert.

"The government needs to maintain a triage system to tackle the COVID-19 situation. Converting big hospitals like LNJP and GB Pant into specific COVID-19 hospitals and discharging other patients is unfair. Our public healthcare system was intentionally neglected and now is not equipped to handle the added pressure that corona pandemic has created. The government has to take responsibility of patients suffering from ailments such as heart and kidney diseases, cancers and other infections. Instead of discharging those patients, the government must have made some alternative arrangements," said Dr Harjit Singh Bhatti, National President, Progressive Medicos and Scientists Forum (PMSF).

We demand the following:

- Government must ensure that the critically ill patients, patients who are on ventilators or need specialised care be provided health care
- In case patients need to be shifted out, alternative admissions for them must be ensured with full responsibility for safe transfer and continuity of care.
- If they are shifted to private hospitals, then they must be treated free of cost.
- Government should make use of Railway, Army, ESIS and other available hospitals to tide over increasing patient loads
- Patients who suffer from chronic illnesses and those who are critically ill, for instance those who need dialysis, cancer patients, and others must be ensured proper treatment and management of the disease

While we understand that COVID-19 is a highly infectious disease and Delhi's health system needs to be prepared for every eventuality, it cannot be done at the cost of other patients who are in equal need of medical attention and for whom the risk of mortality is equal or higher.



Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, Delhi

Health for All - Now!

Health is a Basic Human Right!

We appeal to the Delhi Government to accommodate all patients from these hospitals urgently and ensure continuity of their treatment.

Endorsed by:

Aditya Shrivastav, Lawyer
Amrita Johri, Delhi Rozi Roti Adhikaar Abhiyaan
Ashok Agarwal, Advocate and Human Rights Activist
Deepa Venkatachalam, SAMA
Dr Harjit Singh Bhatti, National President, Progressive Medicos and Scientists Forum
Inayat, Public Health Researcher
Indranil, Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, Delhi
Jayant Singh, All India Patient Rights Group
Jeevika S., Lawyer
Jyotsna Singh, Health Writer and activist
Kanika Singh, Social Worker
Lawyers for Detainees
Meera Sanghamitra, NAPM
Dr. Mira Shiva, Public Health Physician
Osama Ummer, Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, Delhi
V R Raman, National Convenor, Public Health Resource Network
Richa, Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, Delhi
Dr. Ritu Priya, Professor, Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, JNU, New Delhi
Sana Contractor, Centre for Health and Social Justice, New Delhi
Sandhya Y.K., SAHAYOG
Sarojini N., JSA
Shalini, Social Work professional
Shailender Hooda, JSA Delhi
Shishir Chand, Delhi Coordinator, People for Better Treatment
Souvik Pyne, Manager, Policy Engagement, YP Foundation
Sumegha Asthana, Public health practitioner
Dr. Vandana Prasad, Paediatrician and Public Health activist
Dr. Vikas Bajpai, Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, JNU

Addresses for Correspondence:

c/o **Delhi Science Forum**, Khasra No.275, West End Road, Saidulajab, New Delhi – 110030
Email: jsanewdelhi@gmail.com