

# 'Doctor on Call' helpline for inaccessible regions

In view of lack of quality infrastructure, dearth of qualified medical functionaries

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In a bid to reach out to citizens particularly those residing in inaccessible terrain having negligible medical facilities, from next year the Centre will launch a 'Doctor on Call' helpline, 1075, in Hindi and English, besides 21 regional languages to help solve their health-related queries.

The 24x7 phone service is being launched in view of lack in quality infrastructure, dearth of qualified medical functionaries, and non-access to basic medicines and medical facilities in rural people, said a senior official from the Health Ministry.

"A service like providing free consultation with a doctor via phone can help us deliver medical service of a doctor at every door step — reliable and quick consultation to even the most inaccessible of the places. National level helpline 1075 has been proposed to begin with this as one of the major goals," said a senior official from the Health Ministry which has launched the helpline.

The first phase of the facility will be kicked off from

January next from four zones—South, North, East and West. There will be approximately 500 doctors available at a time. The languages will be English, Hindi, Bhojpuri, Maithili, Sindhi, Kashmiri, Dogri, Punjabi, Urdu, Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Manipuri, Odia, Santhali, Nepali, Gujarati, Marathi, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and Konkani.

Citizens can put up their medical queries to be responded to in a time-bound manner. "This initiative focuses on harnessing the high number of mobile phones currently being used by almost every household to create a tool to get free consultation by a qualified doctor on the phone.

"Also making this information available in the regional language increases the penetration and relevance," the official added.

Focus will also be on giving scientific prescription based on standardised and uniform code that too all for free to the citizens. This would be path breaking and will reduce the expenditure being incurred today on health and hence could lead to

a healthier India especially for the rural poor. Firstly the registration of the patient will be done, where AADHAR number will also be taken along with mobile number and email, the official explained the concept of the system.

This AADHAR number will help maintain a call history as well as the case history of the patient which can help in better understanding of the patient.

The helpline is being launched to curtail unnecessary visits to the doctors as it has been noticed that many times visits to doctors are avoidable and the health issues can be resolved without wasting precious time and money in making rounds of the hospitals. "Studies have also found that 85 per cent of patients who visit primary health care require symptomatic treatment only," the official said.

The helpline will also help track and map various diseases like dengue and encephalitis. This mechanism can also be used to disseminate emergency information to the patients about the common disease like dengue, tuberculosis, chikungunya etc.

Also, information can be taken of high risk patients and they can be tracked while being treated.