

Prominent health experts launch 'Partnership to Empower Patients'

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New Delhi: Health experts have announced the launch of Partnership to Empower Patients (PEP), a coalition of provider and patient groups, urging policymakers to make patient-centric decisions and create a health care system that patients need and deserve. Members of the advocacy group, which includes prominent medical practitioners and representatives of patient groups and health alliances, aim at improving and promoting patient empowerment and information, thus reducing health inequalities.

Identifying the low levels of patient engagement in health care decision making and having an informed choice, the alliance has been formed to bring together relevant stakeholders to facilitate inclusion of patient perspective in policy narrative to ensure “Right to Health” through representation in advisory and technical groups.

Partnership to Empower Patients (PEP) is an initiative led by Aman Gupta, a public health and advocacy expert. The Group would advocate on behalf of the patient community at large and draw attention of the regulatory bodies and policy makers so that patients, in consultation with their physicians, are offered a greater and informed choice.

Driven by the cause, Aman Gupta, Convenor, PEP said, “India is amidst a revolution in health care with a growing awareness on health care rights among patients. Sustained efforts to ensure patient empowerment and engagement are crucial to accomplish the goal of universal health coverage. The government should adopt a people-centered, integrated health care approach that is focused and organized around the overall health needs of people for building an ecosystem that is well equipped to provide comprehensive health care to all. I hope that through the collaborative efforts of all the esteemed experts, we are able to lay the foundation of a healthier and involved patient community.”

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With the massive growth in technology-driven consumerism, there is a huge opportunity for inclusive healthcare and strong patient advocacy efforts are required with an objective to make researchers and government agencies acknowledge the importance of patient-centred care. Patient-centred care increases value, as it produces healing relationships that patients want, need, and expect. Such health care policies lead to an informed and involved patient and family; responsive health professionals who can focus on disease and knowing the patient; and a well-coordinated and well-integrated healthcare environment that supports the efforts of patients, families, and their clinicians. Policymakers’ support for patient-centred care must include all three legs of this stool.

Patient safety and quality are key to building a strong and functioning health care system that is able to take care of current and future needs of the patient community. Speaking about the launch of this alliance, Dr Sundeep Mishra, Professor of Cardiology, AIIMS said, “Patients’ perspectives are unique. Given their first-hand experience of every stage of the care pathway, they are legitimately positioned to evaluate the care and services received. Involving patients in decision making is a good clinical practice and patient-centred decision-making is

becoming more and more relevant, whether it while seeking treatment or in policy making. As an early advisor to this alliance, I look forward to support the group in their future initiatives and truly hope that their work maximises gains to the patient population.”

Dr A Muruganathan, President, Hypertension Society of India added, “India is already witnessing the emergence of an informed, engaged and empowered patient. Patient-centred care is determined by the quality of interactions between patients and clinicians and now policymakers. With this in mind, there is an urgent need to engage in interactive discussions to enable transformation and re-engineering of the Indian healthcare industry. With enhanced patient participation in their own treatment process, we can provide a better health care maintenance to them. Engaging and motivating patients with enhanced resources is a personalized-care model, facilitating engagement and self-management.”