



Although India occupies only 2.4% of the world's land mass, it supports over 15% of the world's population. India is the second most populated country in the world, with 72.2% of the population (approximately 800 million people) living in rural areas. In India, comparing the health statistics of rural and urban populations tells a story of great inequality. The number of people in rural India continues to increase, with a mortality rate of almost 50% more than that of urban India and an infant mortality rate that is nearly twice as much.

In India, the healthcare sector suffers from the lack of adequate facilities and trained medical professionals. A little over 20,000 primary healthcare centres struggle to serve the vast country's 600,000 villages. Many centres lack quality medicines and trained professionals. Although India has seen progress with the increase of the number of doctors, the population of India has simultaneously experienced explosive growth. India is the biggest exporter of trained doctors amongst developing countries. When it comes to providing healthcare, a bias often exists towards urban areas, which is evident from the fact that there are only 0.04 doctors/ 1000 people in rural India as opposed to 1.90 doctors/1000 people in urban India.

Despite its large population, India's government expenditure on health is abysmally poor at only 1% of total gross domestic product (GDP). As a consequence, even in poor Indian families, 79% of all ambulatory care and 40% of all hospital admissions are in the private sector. Across all states, up to 30% of doctors posts remain vacant and up to 67% of doctors remain absent. Therefore, doctors in India are overburdened, having to provide services to a very high patient population resulting in less time available for patients and self updation.

In addition, there is a lack of trained conventional qualified doctors (MBBS) in many parts of rural India (around 5.6%) due to the high presence of the doctors practicing allopathy medicine who usually have traditional backgrounds in Ayurveda, Unani, and Homeopathy. Almost all of the health care centers in rural India do not have access to sophisticated diagnostic tools and facilities which are available in urban centers. As a result, the rural practitioners have to solely depend on clinical judgment parameters for diagnosing a disease.



Therefore, the existence of a high patient load, lack of time available with patients, inadequate diagnostic facilities, the predominance of physicians practicing traditional medicine and the lack of medical education programs and/or materials together lead to inadequate and improper treatment. This fact is even acknowledged by Dr. Srinath Reddy, President of the Public Health Foundation of India who said - “We have inadequate, under-resourced and poor outreach of primary healthcare in rural areas”.

Taking into account the dismal scenario of healthcare in rural India, Sanofi-Aventis embarked upon Prayas, a knowledge-based initiative aimed at empowering doctors in rural India with the latest developments and updates in medicine.

The vision of Prayas is to:

- Improve healthcare practice in rural India
- Bridge the diagnosis treatment gap for ensuring early management of diseases
- Train rural medical practitioners and give them the access to latest medical knowledge

By 2015, through Prayas, Sanofi-Aventis intends to empower approximately 150,000 doctors across 60,000 towns and villages in India.