



More than Half Allopathic Practitioners are Quacks

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According to Union Health Ministry's data, **57.3% of personnel currently practising allopathic medicine do not have a medical qualification.**

Section 15 of the **Indian Medical Council Act, 1956** prohibits a person other than a medical practitioner enrolled on a State Medical Register to practice medicine in the State. Any person acting in contravention is punishable with imprisonment and fine, and since health is a **State subject**, the primary responsibility to deal with such cases lies with the respective State governments.

- This puts at risk rural patients who suffer because of an **urban to rural doctor density ratio of 3.8:1**, and India's **poor doctor-population ratio of 1:1456** as compared with the World Health Organisation standards of 1:1000.
- According to government records, a total of 11,46,044 allopathic doctors were registered with the State Medical Councils/ Medical Council of India as on December 31, 2018.
 - Besides, there are also 7.63 lakh Ayurveda, Unani and Homeopathy (AUH) doctors in the country.
 - Assuming 80% availability, it is estimated that around 6.1 lakh AUH doctors may be actually available for service, and considered together with allopathic doctors, we have a doctor-population ratio of 1:884, which is still low.
- The Health Ministry is now planning to bring in **mid-level healthcare providers** to relieve overburdened specialists.

Wide gaps in comprehensive **primary healthcare services** for many rural areas need to be filled through **competent mid-level healthcare providers who are adequately trained, technologically enabled and legally empowered**.

- India **should learn from the countries** such as Thailand, United Kingdom, China and even a city like New York which have permitted community health workers/ nurse practitioners into mainstream health services, with improved health outcomes.
- Even states like Chhattisgarh and Assam have experimented with **community health workers**, and that according to independent evaluations carried out by the Harvard

School of Public Health, have performed very well.

Mid-level Healthcare Providers

- They are health workers with **2-3 years of post-secondary school healthcare training** who undertake tasks usually carried out by doctors and nurses, such as clinical or diagnostic functions.
- They are increasingly being used to **render services autonomously, particularly in rural and remote areas** to make up for the gaps in health workers with higher qualifications.
- Despite their growing role, **they are seldom properly integrated into the health system** and are not adequately planned for nor managed.

Source: TH