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### India needs cutting-edge technology to become global healthcare destination

Dr. Prathap C. Reddy, Founder, Chairman, Apollo Hospitals Group, speaks about NCDs, healthcare challenges and solutions in a conversation with Shivani Arora.

**You have been the pioneer in revolutionising private healthcare sector. Where do you see it now?**

In India, the last few decades have certainly witnessed a healthcare revolution. High quality healthcare on par with global standards has become a lot more accessible and affordable. High-end medical technology in particular has been a huge enabler in bringing about this paradigm shift.

Yet, personally, I am of the view that we continue to be where we were over three decades ago, that is before 1983, the year when India's first private hospital, Apollo Hospitals in Chennai opened its door to the people of this country. My seemingly harsh view is based on the reality that till date, over 40% of the country's population travels over 100 km from towns and villages to access even basic medical care.

The healthcare imperative for the future has to be that the benefits of positive progress cascade to all and only then can we claim to be a truly inclusive nation. The biggest healthcare challenge ahead of us in the present day is that of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Furthermore, the health infrastructure is in a woeful state in the country. We need to add 100,000 beds annually for the next 10 years to address the need-gap and be in sync with the mandated WHO standards of beds to population.



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### **According to you, what more needs to be done in healthcare sector?**

I think the primary step is to create greater awareness about early detection and the importance of regular health checks. We also have to upgrade the technology available in India. At Apollo we already have the best infrastructure and diagnostic equipment, thanks to companies like Toshiba for their streamlined processes that have equipped us to handle emergencies.

I have personally adopted my home town in Chittoor district under the auspices of a first of its kind endeavour called Total Health and in time, this will emerge as a role model in community development.

In addition, Apollo's upcoming campaign 'Life is priceless' - Live Healthy India will represent our nationwide drive to create awareness about one's health and the value of one's life.

### **What are the challenges ahead?**

The healthcare challenges and needs in India are four-fold: India faces the human and economic threat posed by NCDs. The second biggest challenge is an acute shortfall of skilled human health resources in the country despite being the second most populous nation in the world.

An attitude to be prepared from a monetary perspective for coping with costs associated with illness and treatment is almost absent in India. A scientific temper and a climate of innovation are critical to address these manifold challenges.

### **How far are we from being a global health care destination?**

India can become the world's preferred healthcare destination undoubtedly! We already have thousands of patients from across the globe coming in for treatment. The present government is taking steps to improve the visa process to enable more medical tourists to come in and that's a positive step ahead. Improved connectivity to the country would also be helpful. In addition, the Government needs to actively promote India's capability to provide a superb blend of Eastern and Western acumen - high-end care with great compassion.



**What do you think of foreign brands as compared to domestic brands in healthcare sector?**

At Apollo we use the best of equipment from across the world. We are now all set to install the Proton Beam Therapy, which would be the first of its kind across South East Asia, Africa and Australia. This launch marks the beginning of the next wave of advancement in radiation therapy in India.

An imperative for India is to make the procedures easy. We have to go through so many clauses for even clinical trials, leave alone manufacturing medical equipment.

It is my dream to see the health scenario in India improving in terms of quality of healthcare, awareness about health, early detection, more number of hospitals, doctors, nurses and paramedics and on the whole to see a healthy nation.