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# CHALLENGES FACED BY HEALTH CARE INDUSTRY IN PUNJAB

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## Abstract

The healthcare industry shapes the foundation of any country's prosperity. Nowadays, government of various countries, are attempting deliberate endeavors to refine the healthcare services situation in the world. However, still, there are many challenges at policy & execution level that act as barriers in accomplishing objectives related to health. And these challenges can be found largely in health care services and there utilization pattern in India as well as Punjab. In this paper attempt has been made to study various challenges faced by health care industry in Punjab. For the purpose of this study, analysis is done on the basis of secondary data. Overall findings of the study indicates that situation of health care industry is not adequate in Punjab. Hence there is a requisite of appropriate measures to address challenges faced by the industry. This study provides useful information for government of Punjab and policy makers, to make improvements in the healthcare sector of the state.

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**Keywords:** Challenges in healthcare sector, Punjab, Secondary data, health care infrastructure

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## Introduction

The healthcare sector in India has grown rapidly over past few years. The critical component of the development process of any country is to assure a minimal area of healthcare to its citizens. So far, India has developed tremendous in healthcare infrastructure as well as in health personnel at primary care and secondary care both in private & public sectors. India has a competitive advantage over other nations as far as less expense of treatment and an enormous number of well-trained medical professionals was concerned. The healthcare system of India consists of healthcare providers, doctors, hospitals, maternity homes, medical diagnostic centers, pathology labs, and paramedical institutions such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH) organizations, that produce skilled human resources. It involves the sub-sectors of hospitals, medical infrastructure, medical devices, telemedicine, health insurance, and medical equipment. The primary drivers of development in the healthcare sector are India's booming population, growing middle class, and expanding purchasing power, growth in infections, chronic degenerative, lifestyle diseases and raising awareness of individual healthcare. The healthcare sector in India is growing rapidly because of expanding inclusion, better service quality and rising consumption by private and public organizations. The Health care framework, act as an intermediately between the service provider and the seeker. It has two major components i.e. the private sector and the public sector. Public healthcare services are those, which are offered

by government institutions whereas, private healthcare services are offered by exclusive or controlled bodies. The public healthcare organizations include mostly most primary healthcare systems (PHCs) built up generally in rural regions. Alongside these, predetermined number of supplementary & tertiary care institutions is additionally there to providing services in key cities. The private healthcare division comprises of secondary, tertiary and quaternary institutions with significant foundation in metros, level I and level II cities.

### **Health Care Industry In India**

The healthcare industry in India is one of the biggest industries in terms of high revenue and employment. In 1990s, the healthcare system of India had grown at 16% of compound annual rate, while in 2009 the whole value of healthcare sector was higher than \$35 billion & in 2012, it increased upto \$70 billion (Planning Commission Report, 2010). However, that was quite low in contrast with other developed and developing nations. It was expected to grow at a yearly growth rate of 17% during the period 2011 to 2020 to touch \$280 US billion dollars. It was predicted that it would rank among the best three healthcare markets regarding steady development by 2020 (Healthcare Industry in India, Indian Healthcare Sector, Services, 2019). The population of India in year 2011 was 1.21 billion and it was expected to increase further in future. The healthcare industry of India was estimated at \$40 billion in 2010, and it was supposed to outreach \$280 billion dollars by 2020 (Industries in 2014, 2014). While announcing the provisional budget 2019, government has stated that there will be 16.65 % increase in allocation for health sector, and they were trying to get approval from parliament regarding health care expenditure of Rupees 96,139.27 (Budget 2019, 2019). Although, India positions hundred and thirty in the human development index, a combined proportion of three dimensions human improvement: living with a long & healthy life, being qualified & also having a decent living standard (Economic Survey 2016-17, 2017).

### **Health Care In Punjab**

Health is one of the most important components of social sector development. It contributes a lot to

the economic development of country. Although Punjab is one of the fastest developing states in India, still it has significant health care needs and large diversities in health status by geographical region & socio-cultural group. During 12th Five Year Plan (year 2012-17) of Punjab special emphasis were laid down to bring health indicators at par with the national level and strengthen the health care system to ensure health care service seekers receive best quality services they need and deserve. Although, over the past few decades, health care in Punjab has undergone vast changes. Despite of continues efforts of government to regulate health care, still service quality in this sector is inadequate. It has been indicated by various studies that a very wide gap exists in rural and urban health indicators and infrastructure in Punjab. Moreover, it is also confirmed that expenditure done on health is an important determinant of both higher growth and better health status. Therefore, it is essential to examine the health status to understand where Punjab is lagging behind and need to improve. Health care seekers from rural areas still have to travel to urban areas due to inappropriate services in rural hospitals. Moreover, due to lack of quality treatment in public hospitals, people move to private hospitals, which provide better services and facilities. In this paper, effort has been made to examine challenges faced by the health care industry in Punjab.

### **Research Methodology**

For the purpose of this study secondary data was collected from various journals, newspapers, books, conference proceedings, and government websites like the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Punjab Health System Corporation, World Health Organization. Along with that, various reports like Punjab Statistical Abstract 2018, Punjab-At-A-Glance District-Wise 2016, Economic Survey 2017-18, Health Sector Financing by Centre and States/UT's in India, 2014-15 to 2016-17, were consulted.

### **Challenges Faced By Health Care Industry in Punjab**

Punjab is a state of high economic growth, high affordability, and a significant contributor to the

nation's Gross Domestic Product. This State has been at the forefront of the Green Revolution, its populace has linkage with national as well as international level because of migrations abroad and outside the state. As per 2011 census, the total state population was 27.7 million, out of which 17.3 million was rural while 10.3 million is urban population. The rural population was 62.51% of the complete population and the urban population was about 37.49% of the complete population. The density of the population was around 551 person's per. sq. km. (Statistical abstract Punjab, 2018). The state of Punjab in the terms of basic household amenities was better off than all India average as, 99 percent of the population was served by improved drinking water facilities and toilet facilities (Government of Punjab., 2013).

Despite all, change in the healthcare scenario of Punjab was sluggish. Earlier People were dependent on Government hospitals and individuals had to travel to other states for treatment. Different gaps were found in Punjab healthcare system, which was making it impossible to deliver healthcare services effectively. A proposal was drafted to seek the assistance of the World Bank. In March 1995, World Bank group visited Punjab, did an investigation, and prescribed to conduct a workshop with respect to the issue. It was decided in the workshop that there should be fully autonomous and Independent Corporation referred to as Punjab Health Systems Corporation for establishing, extending, improving, and administering medical care in the State of Punjab. Since then Punjab has demonstrated terrific development in healthcare (Department of Health & Family Welfare, Punjab, India, 2019).

Punjab led to a remarkable improvement in the availability of healthcare institutions and supporting infrastructure in the state. In year 2018, the number of hospitals had increased to 98 from 91 (year 2011), PHC's has increased to 495 from 444 (year 2011), dispensaries has decreased to 1388 from 1412 (year 2011) and CHC 's have increased to 151 from 130 ( year 2011). However, number of beds have decreased from 23,220 (year 2015-16) to 22,892 (year 2018). There has been an increase in registered doctors (29772), midwives (56782), nurses (77272) in year 2018 as compared to previous years (Statistical abstract Punjab, 2018).

Still, to satisfy the requirements of the rising population, the availability of beds in hospitals & health institutions are inadequate. Also, there is a wide gap between the ratio of doctors and patients in the state. Demand and awareness for better quality healthcare have expanded among healthcare clients to a great extent because of increment in literacy rate, rising wages. Overwhelming expenditure has been done on advancement and still a lot more is required.

Studies demonstrate that there is a wide gap in rural and urban health indicators and infrastructure. It was observed from the figures stated in statistical abstract of Punjab, 2018, that downward pattern was observed in birth rate, death rate and infant mortality rate in year 2016. However, a gap was observed in indicators: Birth rate (per thousand per annum) was 15.6 in rural areas and 14.1 in urban areas Death rate (per thousand per annum) was 6.9 in rural and 5.1 in urban areas; Infant mortality rate (per thousand per annum) was 23 in rural and 18 in urban areas of Punjab (Statistical abstract Punjab, 2018). Punjab Human Development Report (2004) lays stress on the need to strengthen healthcare in Punjab. The health indicator reveals that urban regions in Punjab had better health status than rural areas. Rural health services had been ignored and there is a requirement for infrastructure development in rural areas. Financial allocation by the state for the primary and secondary healthcare sector as well as public investment was found to be very less (The Government of Punjab, 2013).

According to health ministry report (2013-14), Punjab is the second-lowest per capita spending Rs. 647 per year on public health. It results in lack of infrastructure as government hospitals in Punjab having 2420 beds that served the average size population even compared to other poor states Odisha, Madhya Pradesh & Assam. As per the literature from Brookings India, based on National Sample Survey office (NSSO), Punjab has second highest proportion of household (18.5%) expenditure on healthcare. According to NSSO report 2016, the average expenditure of Punjab on healthcare and medical equipment was largest among all states as well as union territories with Rs. 31,512 and double as compared with average expenditure of India with Rs. 15,336 (Singh, 2017).

The government of Punjab has endeavored persistent efforts to ensure healthcare is well maintained in the state. However, it was found that, state government spent on healthcare industry only twenty five percent which was same as the amount spent in previous four decades. National Health Profile (2015) reveals that in Punjab every family spends average Rs. 196.5 every month on healthcare. Recently, the state government introduced user charges that should be taken in government hospitals of Punjab. The reason behind that was, collection of more revenue to spend more on health care industry, however, latter they refused to do so. Healthcare economists stated that, people need to spend more on healthcare facilities if the state government will spend lesser (Bharti, 2019). People started to move towards the private sector hospitals as they provide better and proficient treatment as compare to public hospitals. Recently, Punjab government has invited private institutions to operate community and primary healthcare centers, in rural & urban areas, which were government created and furnished already. Moreover, Punjab was currently facing problem of lack of medicinal equipment and techniques to tackle the issues like obesity and undernourishment. (Public healthcare facilities to be handed over to private Sector in Gujarat, Punjab, 2019).

## Conclusion

Punjab government has taken different measures to regulate and control healthcare services. Principle focus was on standardized charges to ensure transparency, quality services at hospitals, information maintenance regarding diseases, death as well as birth records. Devoted famous doctors and specialists were appointed to serve in the hospitals of Punjab. One of the cornerstone during twelfth five Year Plan (2012-17) of Punjab was, equipped medical colleges, attach hospitals having modern infrastructure with them, give contemporary education provision and particularly lay emphasis to bring health indicators at par with the national level (Government of Punjab, 2014). Also, efforts towards quality improvement were made to strengthen the health system in Punjab. The overall facts and figures demonstrated that, health

care industry in Punjab was lacking latest facilities, adequate infrastructure and appropriate number of manpower to face new challenges. Moreover, expenditure done by state government on health care is also not sufficient. There is a serious requisite on the part of government and policy makers, to revise the health care strategies in Punjab, to ensure health care customers receive the effective care, they need and deserve.

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