

To,

Ms. Preeti Sudan,
Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare,
Government of India,
New Delhi

Dear Ms. Sudan,

We are writing this mail on behalf of civil society organisations from across the country to draw your attention to certain urgent issues concerning protection of patients' rights, which require actions to be taken by your ministry. As you might be aware, recently an online petition has been launched by the civil society organisation SATHI, which is addressed to the Union health Minister Shri J.P. Nadda – do see attached this petition with names of over 1200 current signatories from across the country who have endorsed this petition within just the last one week. You can also view the petition online here, which is being widely circulated and continues to gather more endorsements every hour:

www.change.org/p/shri-j-p-nadda-adopt-the-patient-rights-charter-regulate-rates-in-private-hospitals-now

As you can see, this popularly supported petition has taken cognizance of widespread violation of patients' rights and unethical practices in private hospitals across India. We support this petition and are demanding that the following actions be taken promptly by the Union health ministry:

1. **Immediate adoption of the Charter of Patients' Rights**, which has been developed by the National Human Rights Commission, and was then displayed on Health Ministry's website since August 2018. We are aware that a large number of comments would have been received on this important charter, however given the fact that nearly six months have elapsed since it was displayed, now it is high time that this charter is adopted by the Ministry without any dilution in its core content, although refinements might be made based on the comments received. We hope that this matter would be treated by you as the highest priority and the charter may be adopted before the pre-election code of conduct comes into force.
2. **Moving towards effective regulation of rates in private hospitals** which firstly requires re-starting the stalled process of developing standard rates for various medical services, which had been initiated by your ministry in 2014 but was then dropped for reasons unknown to the public. Secondly, legally notifying all standards for hospitals related to the national Clinical Establishments Act 2010, which would enable the states and Union territories which have adopted the act, to ensure that hospitals fulfill these standards (including standard rates) as a condition for regular registration. Since basic work on standardisation of rates has already been carried out, we strongly urge that **such steps towards price control of rates in private hospitals must now be taken without any further delay, which would bring relief to hundreds of millions of patients and their families, who suffer from unaffordable and even exploitative charges in many private hospitals.**

3. **Create a patient friendly Grievance Redressal Mechanism** such as independent tribunal or commission, which would be accessible to the common person, and acts swiftly, objectively and effectively to deliver justice to victims of widespread malpractices in the private healthcare sector.

We feel that it is high time that your ministry moves with utmost speed and effectiveness to take the long-overdue steps mentioned above. In this context, we would like to inform you that the national and state level networks which work on health rights and patients' rights and are mentioned below, are collaborating to peacefully demonstrate on 26th February 2019 at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi in support of these demands. With this background, we would request a meeting on 26th February after 3 pm with yourself along with senior officials dealing with this theme within the Union Health Ministry, to share our suggestions and concerns, and to understand the further processes which may be adopted by the Ministry for taking action on these important issues in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (Deepa and Dr. Abhijit More)

All India Patients' Rights Group (Jayant Singh)

Mahila Pragati Manch (Vimla)

People for Better Treatment (Shishir Chand)

National Campaign for Right to Public Health (Adv. Ashok Agarwal)

Delhi Network of Positive People (Hari Shankar)

CC: Dr Mandeep Bhandari, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare