

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE ON THE OCCASION OF INAUGURATION OF
THE FIRST NIMCARE WORLD HEALTH DAY - GLOBAL
SUMMIT**

Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi: APRIL 7, 2017

I am indeed happy to be amidst you on the occasion of the First NIMCARE World Health Day - Global Summit. Celebrated on April 7 every year to mark the anniversary of the founding of the World Health Organization, the World Health Day provides a unique opportunity to mobilize action around a specific health topic of concern to people all over the world. The theme of the 2017 W.H.O. Day campaign is “Depression: Let’s Talk”.

2. I am happy that NIMCARE has taken the lead in organizing this Conference on World Health Day. The slogan of the first NIMCARE World Health Day Summit is, ‘Unite for a Healthy Mind’. Some time ago, the entire world made a commitment in the form of Sustainable Development Goals in which mental health and well-being figure prominently. With these, we have committed ourselves to achieve quantified targets by 2030. Looking at the scale of the problem and limited time available, our task is indeed quite challenging.

Ladies and gentlemen,

3. Lack of mental well-being contributes significantly to the total disability and morbidity burden across the world. Productivity of human beings, whether in workforce or in family situations, gets reduced significantly if one has any mental disorder. Mental health disorders span a very wide range from simple disorders to very complex situations. It is often seen that simpler disorders, if not managed in time, tend to become more complex putting the patient at higher risk of morbidity. Such patients often become a bigger burden on the families.

4. Out of all the mental health disorders, depression is probably the most common. Depression affects people of all ages from all walks of life and in all countries. As per the National Mental Health Survey 2015-16 conducted by NIMHANS, 5.2% of the Indian adult population suffers from depression in some form or the other. The problem of depression often gets ignored due to lack of understanding on the part of

family members. The social stigma attached to a mental disorder, even if it is easily treatable, is also a major problem in India. However, people have now started talking about this issue leading to greater awareness in this respect. I would like to point out that traditional Indian values along with our family system, can be good mechanisms to support those who suffer from mental health disorders. I would like to urge medical practitioners here to focus on the social support systems, spiritual beliefs and practices as well as the system of Yoga in their quest for providing well-being to all.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

5. There is a severe shortage of mental health professionals in India and this service gap can be bridged effectively by telemedicine. The World Health Day Summit has begun in the right direction by launching the eCAP & SOL's Telepsychiatry application for the rural and urban population in need of mental health consultation. I am happy to know that the International Society for Telemedicine and e-Health, USA has now recognized Telemedicine Society of India as the official National society presenting telemedicine activities in India. Telepsychiatry will help in reducing the mortality rate considerably, with the advent of mobile apps which are being developed. This will be of immense importance in giving consultation services to the unreached patients.

6. I am particularly happy to have received the first copy of a CD on "Guidelines & Resource Materials for Telemedicine Centers of Armed Forces". Telemedicine application in Armed Force's health care delivery and the health monitoring of defence force personnel and their dependents is of paramount importance. With the introduction of new NODES for implementation of Telemedicine for the Army, accessibility to quality healthcare especially in hilly areas of the north east will be enriched. I have no doubt that, Telemedicine will play a very important role in saving the lives of our Army jawans and provide them advance updates on health related issues. Telemedicine is well suited for Armed Forces and will significantly improve the health care delivery system.

Ladies and Gentleman:

7. I am glad that the organizers of this World Health Day Summit have planned strategic follow up conclaves in different cities of the world to create a broad framework for collective action. I appeal to all of you, to THINK GLOBALLY and ACT LOCALLY. I also urge all relevant stakeholders to come together in meeting the challenges of depression.

8. I am indeed happy to have conferred the NIMCARE Life Time Achievement Award on Dr. N M Veeraiyan, Chancellor, Saveetha University, Chennai who has transformed Saveetha University into one of the leading universities in the country through his dedication, commitment and hard work. It is also my privilege to have presented the NIMCARE World Health Day Awards of Excellence to outstanding citizens of our nation in recognition of their outstanding services to the people.

Ladies and Gentleman:

9. Before I conclude, I applaud the efforts of Dr Vijay G Prabhakar a renowned public health practitioner from Chicago, USA for taking this initiative to conduct the first NIMCARE World Health Summit here in India and also congratulate the co-host organisations who have united with NIMCARE to form a broad framework to create awareness about depression and combating it. I welcome the co-host organisations from overseas to this Summit.

10. Let us strive to make even greater progress in our efforts to create awareness about depression and focus on further strengthening our health care delivery systems. I am confident that this NIMCARE World Health Day Summit will provide all of you an opportunity to get inspired, challenged and make meaningful partnerships for your continued growth. I hope all the participants here go back better equipped to handle mental health care situations that warrant urgent attention. Let us all unite for addressing the issue of mental health care and to prevent and combat depression. I wish you Godspeed and success in all your endeavours.

Thank You.

Jai Hind.
