

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE AT THE CONVOCATION CEREMONY OF ARMY  
COLLEGE OF DENTAL SCIENCES**

Secunderabad: Dec 23, 2016

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1. It is my pleasure to be here on the occasion of the convocation ceremony of Army College of Dental Sciences. Established in 2001, this college has done remarkably well in a short span of time. From gaining a grade 'A' NAAC accreditation to being ranked consistently amongst the top dental institutions in India, it has brought glory to both the Indian Army and the country. By enrolling the wards of Army personnel and making them competent dental professionals, this institution has been rendering yeomen service.
2. Let me congratulate the young bright students - who have turned dental surgeons today - and the others who have been conferred the Master of Dental Surgery. I see exhilaration and a sense of achievement in them which they truly deserve after years of hard labour. I also see pride and a sense of fulfilment on the faces of their parents. Raising a family in the military environment involves struggle and sacrifice. Armed Forces professionals undergo regular transfers and are frequently required to serve in difficult areas, posing risks to life. Lack of stability and dearth of access to good quality education at the place of postings keep Army personnel away from their families for long. Despite all odds, the fact that they have succeeded in giving their children good education is a matter of immense satisfaction. I compliment these families of the Indian Army on the occasion.
3. I am happy to find a number of girls amongst the graduating students today. Empowered women make for an empowered society. I wish to see this encouraging feature strengthen further in the coming years.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

4. Good health is a gift of God. It is also earned through the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle. Lord Buddha had said and I quote: "*To keep the body in good health is a duty.... otherwise we shall not be able to keep*

*our mind strong and clear*" (unquote). It is important to regulate our daily routine so that we can enjoy good health throughout our life. Oral health is an important component of the overall health profile of an individual. But not much attention is paid to this aspect of human well-being.

5. Many in our country suffer from poor oral health due to wrong lifestyle choices. Consumption of tobacco, junk food, aerated beverages and sweets damage teeth and cause dental caries. Compounding the problem is a general lack of awareness and neglect. Lack of identification of oral diseases at initial stages and neglect of oral health deterioration adds to the disease burden. This is especially true of the economically lower segment for which cost of dental care sometime proves prohibitive. Special measures are necessary to cover the vulnerable sections with reasonable oral healthcare services.

Dear friends:

6. The quantum of work required to be done in this field is huge. It is incumbent on physicians and dentists to reinforce the qualities of oral health hygiene in people. Unless citizens enjoy good health, their productive potential cannot be realized fully. It is important to ensure adequate coverage of the population with quality healthcare infrastructure. We have over 300 dental colleges in the country producing around 30,000 dentists annually. These numbers are somewhat inadequate as the 'dentist to patient' ratio is small, particularly in the sub-urban and rural areas. As against an already low ratio of 1:8,000 in urban areas, the dentist to population ratio is acute in rural areas with one dentist for every 50,000 people.
7. If we have to close the gap between the number of people seeking dental treatment and the number of dentists available, we have to introduce innovative models of service delivery. In addition to organizing dental camps and dental education outreach camps, we need to increase access through mobile dental clinics. To spread awareness about the importance of oral health hygiene, the support and contribution of qualified and motivated dental professionals like you will be paramount.
8. It has become imperative to initiate awareness drives and reach out to the population that has so far been excluded from dental care services. We have to start from a basic level, by educating parents

and teachers on proper oral healthcare regime and ensure that good practices are inculcated in large number of children. To reach out effectively to the under-privileged and backward sections of our population, we have to employ simpler methods for them to remember and benefit from. Video aid and demonstration will enhance the knowledge of people on this subject. To develop a culture of oral health in our society, we have to create a mindset that understands the importance of improving personal oral hygiene.

Dear graduating students:

9. As you leave the portals of this institution today, be assured that the intellectual, social and technical skills you have acquired here from the teachers and members of faculty would stand you in good stead. In your career, there will be many professional accomplishments to your credit. Your parents, teachers and alma mater will be proud of your achievements. But there will also be a higher calling in your life. You are venturing into a noble profession like medicine. In society, a doctor is accorded the status of God. Honour the trust that people will repose in you. Honour the Hippocratic Oath. Use your knowledge and technical expertise for the welfare of the common man. With your professional might, contribute to the cause of humanity, and touch and transform the lives of millions. I wish each one of you good luck and success in all your future endeavours.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

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