

Chapter 12

Inter-Relationship of Health, Communication, and Commerce: A Study of the Healthcare Sector in Odisha, India

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 has given a new dimension to the healthcare industry of India. The pandemic has exposed the limited health capacity of the states including Odisha. Hence an attempt has been made to evaluate the performance of healthcare services in Odisha. Further, it will also analyze the content of the advertising campaign used to popularize the health packages. It will critically study the communication approach, design and angles of the campaign and find out how they have been prepared to influence the people with pre-conceived desired aims. The study will be based on the secondary sources. The study infers that the performance of the government health sector is not up to the mark and the private hospitals have manipulated with the guidelines to attract the people through their campaign. Hence, measures to be taken to improve healthcare sector and to regulate manipulations by the private sector.

1. INTRODUCTION

The pandemic Covid-19 has infected over 32 million people globally (World Health Organization, 2022). The case of corona has been on rise despite of the various lockdown measures. Further after the relaxation of the lockdown measures, there has been a rapid rise in cases across countries (International Monetary Fund, 2022). The number of cases in India has risen to over 4.3 millions, within a period of six month (Worldometer, 2022). The outbreak of this pandemic has put to test the resilience and effectiveness of the health systems. It has also taught for an urgent need of a strong health workforce which is considered to be an important part of a strong health care system (ILO, 2022).

In India, Odisha was one of the first states to Covid-19 as a State disaster even before the declaration of it as National disaster (Das, 2020). The state was first to come up with an online portal for Covid-19 pandemic. Similarly, it has been the first in announcing a number of innovative policy interventions like imposing lockdown in the entire state, opening Covid-19 special hospitals with public-private-partnership and providing ₹50 lakh insurance cover to all health workers engaged in the fight against Covid-19 (Orissa Economic Association, 2020). It has also announced that in case of death in harness the state would honour the health workers as martyrs. In order to boost the morale of health professionals engaged in the fight against Covid-19, advance payment of salary for health professionals was announced by the State Government. The state had also got a thumbs up from World Health Organisation and UNESCO, as the teams found that the hospitals in the state have been operating with 96 per cent compliance in all parameters (Bhatia, 2020).

But, the months of June and July has changed the course of the state and its battle against coronavirus. Returning of about one million migrants from various states has completely made the situation worst for the Government. The state started to see a sudden surge in coronavirus cases from 35,000 active cases as on 24 Sep 2020 to more than 12 lakhs as on June 2022 (Government of Odisha, 2022). Earlier, in 2020, despite of spending around INR 1,900 crore on Covid control and healthcare infrastructure, the state government has to face under criticism for its mishandling of the crisis.

2. CONCERN OF THE STUDY

The Covid-19 has given a new dimension to the healthcare industry of India. On one hand the government both at the Centre and state have struggled to provide proper care to the people in accordance to the WHO guidelines. For the common people, especially in the rural areas, there has been few or no option of getting any substantive treatment. So far there are 48 dedicated Covid-19 hospitals with 7,328 beds and 710 ICU beds (Barik, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the limited health capacity of the state. While people were provided special care for Covid-19, there were instances of death due to non-Covid-19 diseases owing to lack of adequate healthcare facilities. Despite of hard efforts by the state government for hiring health professional during the pandemic, still there is only one doctor for every 5,500 people (Kar, 2020).

The private hospitals, however, has converted the pandemic into an opportunity to multiply profit by coming up with special Covid-19 packages. The packages have also been promoted and marketed aggressively through mass media, particularly social and online media, in an effort to popularize them. Recent studies have also shown that the business of the private health sector has increased during the Covid-19 period. That makes it imperative to look back at the marketing and promotional strategies in

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