

WORK WITH COMPASSION BRINGING
“HIGH TECH WITH HIGH TOUCH”.

Convocation Address:
Dr. Prathap C Reddy,
Chairman, Apollo Hospitals Group

Twenty Third Convocation of
The Tamil Nadu Dr. M. G R. Medical University, Chennai
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It is indeed a great privilege that Dr.MGR Medical University has given me an opportunity to deliver the 23rd Convocation Address on this eminent day. Your Excellency Dr. Rosaiah has been a well wisher to me personally and Apollo for the past three decades and has supported our emergence as a global healthcare player.

I am very pleased that today the Pro-Chancellor of the Dr.MGR Medical University is holding a very important portfolio as Hon'ble Minister for Health at a crucial point in time. It is a privilege that Dr. Kameswaran, the **senior most ENT surgeon in India** and a distinguished academician is our Guest of Honour.

Prof. Mayilvahanan's father Prof. M. Natarajan's contributions in the rapid advance of the Orthopaedics speciality were immense. In India and across the world, he was renowned as an outstanding Orthopaedic surgeon, an illustrious speaker and more importantly, he had a great impact in the lives of his students as well and society at large. His contributions in formulating health policies were also noteworthy. Dr. Mayilvahanan, with an illustrious background, you have grown to a stature that your parents would be proud of and the country accepts your singular contribution to health. Today as the Vice Chancellor of Dr.MGR Medical University, you have brought laurels and given leadership a new focus and are developing energetic health leaders. Please accept my commendations on behalf of all of us who have known your father.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the recipients of the Life Time Achievement Awards. I have personally known their significant contributions to health and health education.

It is a great pride to see the budding young generation of healthcare professionals receive their degrees. Now, with the excellent programme that you have gone through under the Tamil Nadu Dr.MGR Medical University, you will be an asset to the Nation and help serve a billion people. It would only be right, if I say that each one of you will singularly impact our Nation's health landscape.

I hope the entire Nation will follow the lead of The Tamil Nadu Dr.MGR Medical University in expanding the number of undergraduates, graduates and post graduates to cover the entire spectrum of healthcare.

From a seemingly inconspicuous industry, healthcare is becoming an increasingly dynamic and significant industry today. **So, you will need to practice to meet today's health requirements.**

A decade ago, the Indian healthcare sector was not considered as a key driver of national economic performance. However, over the years, there has been a fundamental change to this paradigm, with conclusive evidence from the world over firmly establishing that improved health leads to better economic performance and prosperity. The direct benefits from healthcare have become too large to be ignored.

Apollo started with a vision to bring healthcare of international standards to India. In the seventies, I realized that when a young 38 year old patient of mine who needed surgery in the US had a

cardiac arrest and we could not revive him. He could not raise \$50,000 for surgery in the US. That tragic incident catalyzed a revolution and was the genesis of Apollo.

Today, almost in all departments, we are able to match the best institutions. We have done 125,000 heart surgeries. What makes us proud is that our outcomes are among the best in the world and to fulfill the vision of that young man whom I lost, we perform surgeries which do not cost US \$50,000, but will cost US \$ 3000 to 5000 with the same or better outcomes. Similarly, many other Indian hospitals have adopted best technologies and are able to tackle complex clinical problems to take on the newer burden of diseases.

You would have heard WHO saying that India has probably eliminated polio which makes us feel proud. A special mention needs to be made about the NGOs who have supported these programmes.

Two decades ago, we were afraid that HIV is going to be a devastating problem. Although we have not eliminated it, we have managed a fair degree of damage control.

Our Nation has today 3 significant challenges:

- 1. An acute demand –supply gap of Hospital Beds**
- 2. Severe Shortage of Health Human Resources**
- 3. The ‘New Threat’ - NCDs**

The required bed-to-population ratio is established at 1 bed per 300 individuals, or approximately 30 beds per 10,000 individuals. In order to attain the global benchmark for beds to population ratio, it is estimated that India will require an investment of approximately Rs.6.4 trillion (Rs.640,000 crores). I must also express that the Government needs to proactively give a stimulus to health so that we will be able to fill the huge demand-supply gap.

The second is to increase the health human resources by doubling our doctors from 0.7 Mn to 1.5 Mn, tripling the nurses from 0.8 Mn to 2.5 Mn and paramedics from 2.5 Mn to 10 Mn. This will result in good quality healthcare facilities and thereby generate employment opportunities for the large young population.

The most worrisome is the burgeoning burden of the rapidly growing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). These NCDs will account for over two-thirds of the deaths in India. India already has the privilege of holding three gold medals – Diabetic Capital, Heart Capital and Cancer Capital of the world. I know you would support the Nation in throwing away these gold medals in the Bay of Bengal or Indian Ocean.

You would be startled to see the predictions that India will have 350 Mn diabetes by the year 2020. But the statistics of 2011 revealed that we have already crossed 350 Mn. Imagine what our numbers will be by 2020. As health experts, you all are well aware that diabetes does not spare any organ.

As a Cardiologist, I am very concerned with the Indian heart diseases which has transformed as a major killer, impacting lives of young Indians. Just last week, you would have read about the 30 year old Technocrat travelling to India from Singapore to get his father's blessings on his birthday. He could see his father from the baggage clearing area and then all of a sudden, he collapsed. The medical emergency team in the airport rushed but could not reverse his cardiac arrest. This is not a rare incident. All hospitals across the Nation are coming across many of these 30-40 year old individuals reaching the hospitals with an acute heart attack and some of them are not even able to reach the hospitals in time. No doubt, there are few hospitals where if they reach the hospital on time, the doctors could immediately rush and perform a primary plasty and make a huge difference to their lives. But, as a Nation, we do not have adequate training or infrastructure to tackle this heart tragedy overcoming the Nation.

We as Indians are at a far greater risk of heart disease than most other nationalities. **In fact, we are four times more likely to have a heart attack than our Western counterparts. But the good news is that we CAN do something about it.**

Cancer is still the dreaded word! The best institutions in our country and the world have a record of only 35% survival after five years. In India we have the best technology such as the state of the art Linac, CyberKnife, Novalis and the facilities for chemo therapy like leading institutions in the world. We also have a good back up of Oncology Surgeons. But the irony is that the patients do not come to us early enough. **"Cancer is curable if detected early"**

So, I believe that everyone should primarily give great focus in bringing awareness of this national health burden and enable early detection. The WHO has forecasted that in the next decade India would spend about \$270 Bn for treating these NCDs. But more importantly, it is going to lose crucial youth who are driving the economic progress of our country. We need to tackle this pandemic by creating greater awareness. At Apollo, we have brought in a concept of "Billion Hearts Beating" and a few lacs of our population have taken the pledge. I am looking for the day when several 100 million young people take the pledge.

If we look at other industries, they would say that there is huge scope and look at it as one with bright growth prospects. You and I coming from noble profession should pledge saying that I will endorse and bring all my powers for united action to make India a healthy nation.

Harnessing technology can transform healthcare delivery at the rural and semi-rural level. The vision to achieve health for all is achievable given the right mix of resources, technology, innovation and all-round stimulus.

The evolution of wireless technologies coupled with new developments in the wired space are ensuring transfer of huge amount of data in minutes and seconds, thus reducing the distance and lead time. Telemedicine and its multiple forms are transforming healthcare, and Geography is becoming History. A very recent example is Apollo Telemedicine "Hospital on Wheels" Camp at Srirangam, Bodinayakanur, Ajmer and Surat, all within 8 hours, from 5 cubicles, 150 consultants from Chennai to Delhi with over 10,000 patients.

Robotics is also fast emerging as a major game-changer in today's healthcare delivery. And given these new-age development, we should feel elated that we have become high tech in healthcare. But please do not forget Dr. Guruswamy Mudaliar who is a shining example that human touch can heal millions of people. So, the present generation should work with compassion bringing **“high tech with high touch”**.

The three “B”s will transform Healthcare in a way it has never been changed before. Not incrementally but exponentially. **What are these 3 “Bs?”**

1) **Bytes** - As per Moore's Law the processing capacity of IT is doubling every two years (even faster now) and the cost comes down by half. This enhanced processing is giving us newer, improved CT Scan images, better X-rays and integrated technologies like PET CT or analytic capabilities - all resulting in better care and quicker diagnostics.

2) **Bandwidth** - The evolution of wireless technologies coupled with new developments in the wired space are ensuring transfer of huge amount of data in minutes and seconds, thus reducing the distance and lead time. Telemedicine and its multiple forms are transforming healthcare, and Geography is becoming History.

3) **Biology** - The day in the year 2000 that the genome was deciphered, began the race to link gene physiology with disease manifestation thereby enhancing our ability to know who is more susceptible to a disease with this insight comes an enhanced ability to prevent and diagnose and then cure. Biomarkers and perception are early wins in what will be a revolution in healthcare.

As I conclude, I would say, till seventies, everyone went to UK for health and health education. Soon after, the US took its place.

Today, I have a forecast - **“India will become a Global healthcare destination”**, so take pride and enjoy building this nation.

We will walk with you. I bless that you have a great career!

Dr.Prathap C Reddy
Chairman Apollo Hospitals Group

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