IMA votes against amendment to the KPME Bill

Another movement in the making to protest against fixing rates for procedures in private hospitals

New Delhi, 20 June 2017: The IMA has come out against another draconian amendment, this time by the Karnataka government, which seems to follow on the lines of West Bengal. The amendment to the Karnataka Private Medical Establishments (KPME) Act entails fixing of rates for various procedures in private hospitals and penalty for flouting these. The Bill, when passed, will enable the government to regulate private hospitals in all aspects. It also entails setting up of an expert committee to classify private medical establishments and recommend the state government to fix the cost of treatment for different medical services.

Condemning the amendment as a very disturbing trend with the CEA Karnataka trying to follow West Bengal in forming grievances cell and fixing rates, the IMA has called for quick action to be able to fight this act and other such acts at the anvil as soon as possible. The Association has called the fixing of rates as irrational and unacceptable. The IMA recently concluded the Dilli Chalo movement protesting against the atrocities faced by the medical fraternity.

Speaking on this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, "It is unfortunate that the government, instead of providing a favorable and secure environment for doctors, is trying to create severe hurdles even for their day-to-day activities. The KPME (amendment) Bill, 2017 should be stalled to save the doctor-patient relationship. Rates for procedures can be fixed only through scientific calculations. No one can predict the cost in patients with comorbidities and neither for complications and the associated expenditures. It is a fact that small and medium level hospitals are already vanishing due to financial non-viability. The government can bring down costs only by a process of empanelment which is further possible by fixing rates for below poverty line people and allowing hospitals to charge reasonably to those who can afford. Every hospital is either already providing or forced to give free service. Hospitals should not be in a position to file cases to get money back from relatives. This will only make the existing doctor-patient relationship even worse."

The Association has further asked for clarity on the fact that if the government has decided to fix rates, will it pay for those who do not pay the hospital bills. It has also called for an answer on whether the government will bear the responsibility of paying up in the unfortunate circumstance of a patient dying and the relatives being unable to pay the bill.
Adding further, Dr. Aggarwal, said, "The medical fraternity has been doing its best to provide healthcare, utilizing all the latest technologies and treatments, at most affordable rates. It is only due to this that Karnataka has the best of health indicators such as IMR and MMR. With the failure of the government to improve its own hospitals, the private healthcare establishments have shouldered the responsibility with their own investments and expenses. The IMA is in the process of fixing up a meeting with the Karnataka government and convince them to change the law after the protest, failing which it will be only prudent to shut down the hospitals and fight legally."

There is no law in the world that allows anyone to complain about and punish a doctor for merely asking questions to the patient. Creating new regulatory authorities under the alibi that the medical councils, consumer fora, and civil and criminal courts are ineffective, is not only an affront to these institutions, but also a dangerous phenomenon. It will only lead to further expenses, open the doors for more corruption and will certainly cripple each and every doctor.

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2,60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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