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### [Power of compassion: Revolutionising healthcare in India](#)

India has made significant progress in the healthcare sector as part of its plan to become a developed nation by 2047. India's digital transformation has been instrumental in fast-tracking access to quality healthcare through the government's flagship Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, launched two years ago. The focus on healthcare digitisation and infrastructure is one aspect that has led to improvements in healthcare provision and delivery.

#### IMPORTANCE OF WELLNESS

Comprehensive or quality healthcare means health services to be made available, affordable, and accessible. It also means that they are delivered to every person compassionately and respectfully. Research has shown that healthcare is not just about treating the disease or having the infrastructure to enable treatment, but also about the overall well-being of the individual. Many examples demonstrate the crucial role of respectful healthcare in expediting patient recovery, reinforcing the idea that patient experience must be at the core of all solutions in a personal and service-oriented industry like healthcare.

#### COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP CAN REVOLUTIONISE HEALTHCARE

Compassionate leadership is a crucial factor in the healthcare industry, which is constantly changing, and places a significant burden on healthcare providers. The ability of these providers to navigate and manage the situation with compassion and deliver respectful care is essential. At the same time, particularly at the last mile, in underserved areas, insufficient human resources and lack of equipment place an additional burden on healthcare providers to practising compassion.

Compassionate leadership must be developed within the public healthcare system as a priority to make respectful healthcare integral to our system. His Holiness Dalai Lama has emphasised the need for compassion—the quiet, beating heart of the entire healthcare system. While we have seen multiple acts of compassion during the Covid-19 pandemic, such acts must be the norm and not a result of extreme circumstances.

To achieve this, multi-pronged, out-of-the-box approaches are required. It is imperative to build a curriculum and deliver it to all those responsible for respectful healthcare. The Bihar state government has taken the lead on this and now rolling out an 8-stage curriculum developed by Emory University, which

further the Dalai Lama's vision of educating both heart and mind for the greater good of humanity. The Cognitive Based Compassion Training (CBCT) has already impacted 1200 healthcare providers across 20 districts in Bihar towards building compassionate leadership in the public healthcare system. This has

created compassionate leaders at every level, from the security guards at the point of entry to the hospital manager, who feel empowered to manage and resolve complex situations with respect and leadership.

A case in point is the District Hospital in Sitamarhi in Bihar. After undergoing a series of CBCT sessions, the difference is palpable, and it is visible in the smiles on the patients' faces and the satisfaction that the staff feels. The staff can empathise with the patients and view every patient with great compassion. This has significantly enhanced the experiences of patients at every point.

#### INCORPORATING COMPASSION CURRICULUM AND CULTURE

To build a healthcare system that prioritises compassionate leadership, it is important to not only develop and adopt compassion-based curricula at every academic institution and department responsible for health-related learning but also to strengthen the internal systems where respect and compassion are inherent values. This involves building the capacities of state and regional health institutions to deliver compassion curricula and creating partnerships with established academia and development sector organisations to mobilise master coaches and facilitators. In addition, it is crucial to create a network of compassionate practitioners in every state, district, and block hospital to combat burnout and improve the patient experience. Valuing and measuring organisational culture through sound metrics that measure employee satisfaction, self-compassion, compassion for the team, and patient outcomes can also help to build a healthcare institution whose foundation is compassion.

#### COMPASSION IS THE MULTIPLIER IN HEALTHCARE, ESPECIALLY AT THE LAST MILE

The government has specifically leveraged technology and other means in the most underserved areas to ensure that no one is left behind—through telemedicine, mobile health units, and building capacities of community health workers. All these measures are multiplied when the caregiver is inspired and motivated to deliver better, even in challenging circumstances, irrespective of the facilities available to address physical health. Thus, building a network of compassionate practitioners at the last mile can go a long way in improving the overall healthcare experience. These initiatives can help India's population living in the most underserved areas receive the care they need.

India has historically been known for its values of compassion, and the need of the hour is for compassionate leadership to bring those values to life. Respectful healthcare is already being incorporated into National Health Mission (NHM) guidelines, but such guidelines need to be at the core of every policy developed by public health authorities, based on the principles of compassion, service, respect and safe quality care.