Needed: Health coverage to one and all in India

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Public health has emerged as a prominent topic at the 99th Indian Science Congress held here.

A seminar titled “India’s Public Health Challenges: Reconfiguring the Health System for Universal Health Coverage” was organised by Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) and Indian Institute of Public Health, Bhubaneswar (IIPH B) on January 5 on the sidelines of the science congress at KIIT University.

The aim of the seminar was to give due attention to important health challenges that the country is facing and obtain expert’s vision for improvement in Indian public health sector.

The seminar was co-chaired by State Health Department Commissioner-cum-Secretary AnuGarg and IIPH director professor Subhash Hira.

The eminent key speakers at the seminar were professor K. Srinath Reddy, professor Dr Manish Kakker, professor D Prabhakaran, National Advisory Council member Dr A.K. Shiva Kumar, AIIMS Pediatrics department head Vinod Paul and Mirai Chatterjee.

Reddy defined universal health coverage and highlighted the importance of ensuring health for all in India. Kakker said most of the infectious disease research in India has biomedical focus, hence there is need to initiate research with public health orientation and policy. Prabhakaran attributed the reasons for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) like hypertension, diabetes, cancers to lifestyle related factors, in addition to heredity. Shiva Kumar cautioned against the insurance route in ensuring universal health coverage based on the experiences from other countries.

While Vinod Paul stressed on the need for public health cadre in order to meet the huge shortage of health work force in the country, Mirai Chatterjee called for community to take action in order to make universal health coverage a reality. About 300 participants attended the seminar.