

HEALTH CARE NEEDS LONG-TERM DEVOTION

Health care needs long-term devotion

From Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Jan. 4.

UNTIL and unless two successive generations sacrifice their time and energy to work for the health care movement in the country without expecting any returns for atleast a decade, the nation's health problems will remain unanswered.

The heart-breaking realization coming from an eminent cardiologist, Dr. V. Parameshvara, seems to emit a certain kind of emotional optimism in a country where cardiological problems have reached a 'now or never' situation, almost assuming epidemic proportions.

According to Dr. Parameshvara, a combination of political will, committed bureaucracy and dedicated professionals is the best possible way to create a back-up support for better medicare services in the country.

Speaking to *The Hindu* here on Monday on the eve of his receiving the prestigious Dr. B. C. Roy National Award from the President, Dr. Shankar Datta Sharma, Dr. Parameshvara stressed that it was time people took up the health standard history and devoted health-oriented strategies.

In this connection, he observed that medicare in the country had at all times been disease-oriented where health has been considered an insurance and not an investment, as it actually is. The index of health as the amount of health care delivery that a society can furnish on an individual, he said.

Dr. Parameshvara said certain diseases were treated as national calamities because they were reserved to the 'poor'. For example, while the National AIDS Control Programme with national Director A.J.B. was considered to be a social



Dr. V. Parameshvara

disease, cardiological diseases were largely dependent on individual life-styles.

Being a cardiologist does not take away the sense of social responsibility that he feels doctors owe to society. And this leads him to suggest the same old measures which cardiologists all over the country have been preaching: controlled diet, to quit smoking, regular exercise.

The health-oriented approach which Dr. Parameshvara advocates is largely a voluntary effort by the citizens of the country, but he does

not absolve the Government of its responsibility to ensure adequate resources to ward off cardio-diseases based on each individual's need.

For example, the cardiologist feels that the Government remains uninvolved people drinking water, good food and proper ventilation, should also make provision for maintaining high level lanes at a reasonable price. The first priority should be treated on a social obligation rather than a governmental advantage, he said.

The search has come to Dr. Parameshvara for an outstanding contribution in the field of non-research activities. At present, he is practising as a private consultant in Bangalore. He has earlier been a faculty member of the Bangalore Medical College, instrumental in setting up a 100-bedded hospital near the Ash Bhavanashree's trust in Changanvi and also started a Christian Trust in his name for conducting medical tests to the poor and the needy.

As a cardiologist, Dr. Parameshvara seeks prior to disseminate information to prevent the onset of diseases rather than to treat patients. If only diseases of the heart are taken in form of social epidemiology and subsequently efforts are initiated to ward them off, you will not need no many hospitals or running homes, he has stressed.

Though Dr. Parameshvara does not seem to practise medical treatments, he strongly believes that if he can impart in the form of education to many imparted to students in the country. Like many among of the West, he maintains that education should be given to students on medical, statistics rather than studying their own education should be the main task.

New Delhi, Jan. 4

Until and unless two successive generations sacrifice their time and energy to work for the health care movement in the country without expecting any returns for atleast a decade, the nation's health problems will remain unanswered.

This 'harsh-sounding' suggestion coming from an eminent cardiologist, Dr. V. Parameshvara, seems to emit a certain kind of emotional optimism in a country where cardiological problems have reached a 'now or never' situation, almost assuming epidemic proportions.

According to Dr. Parameshvara, a combination of political will, committed bureaucracy and dedicated professionals is the best possible way to create a back-up support for better medicare services in the country.

Speaking to *The Hindu* here on Monday on the eve of his receiving the prestigious Dr. B.C. Roy National Award from the President, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, Dr. Parameshvara stressed that it was time people gave up the “double standard theory” and adopted health-oriented strategies.

In this connection, he observed that medicare in the country has all along been disease-oriented where health has been considered an ‘expenditure and not an investment’, as it actually is. The index of health is the amount of health-care delivery that a society can bestow on an individual, he said.

Dr. Parameshwara said certain diseases were treated as national priorities because they were perceived to be ‘social’. For example, while the National AIDS Control Programme was conceived because AIDS was considered to be a social disease, cardiological diseases were largely dependent on individual life-styles.

Being a cardiologist does not take away the sense of social responsibility that he feels doctors owe to society. And this leads him to suggest the same old measures which cardiologists all over the country have been preaching: controlled diet, to quit smoking, regular exercise....

The health-oriented approach which Dr. Parameshvara advocates is largely a voluntary effort by the citizens of the country, but he does not absolve the Government of its responsibility to ensure adequate measures to ward off common diseases based on each individual’s need.

For example, the cardiologist feels that the government besides providing potable drinking water, good food and proper sanitation, should also make available basic life-saving drugs sans taxes at a reasonable price. “The drug industry should be treated as a social obligation rather than a commercial adventure”, he said.

The award has come to Dr. Parameshvara for his outstanding contribution in the field of sociomedical sciences. At present, he is practising as a private consultant in Bangalore. He has earlier been a faculty member of the Bangalore Medical College, instrumental in setting up a 100-bedded hospital near the Adi Shankaracharya’s math in Sringeri and

also started a Charitable Trust in his name for rendering medical help to the poor and the needy.

As a cardiologist. Dr. Parameshvara would prefer to disseminate information to prevent the onset of diseases rather than to treat patients. “If only diseases of the heart are taken in terms of social epidemiology and subsequently efforts are initiated to ward them off, we will not need so many hospitals or nursing homes”, is his simplistic logic. Five Star culture is not an answer to medical problems, he added.

Though Dr. Parameshvara does not scorn expensive medicare treatment, he strongly feels that it has its genesis in the type of education being imparted to students in the country. Like many other doctors, he describes it as “thought-less aping of the West.” He reasoned that western concepts being superimposable on medicare, students rather than doubting their own education doubt the masses brilliance.
