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Strict enforcement of law a must to kill corruption in healthcare: Experts

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: From undeserved promotions to underqualified doctors and bribes in government institutions, from inflated bills in the private sector and inaction against negligence, experts at a discussion on Wednesday deliberated over a variety of ill practices plaguing the Indian healthcare system, with the majority of the debate revolving around 'who is responsible?'.

While Dr Devi Shetty of Narayana Group of Hospitals blamed the civil society for not questioning enough, other experts disagreed and said the civil society and activists have been punching above their weight, and that the problem is systemic and deep-rooted. "Farmers keep blocking highways and roads in Bengaluru for loan waiver. Have they ever questioned why their healthcare is so expensive or about the corruption in healthcare. The civil society has been quiet for far too long," Dr Shetty said.

SYSTEMIC FAULTS



Dr Thelma Narayan, director, Society for Community Health Awareness Research and Action, who has both practised medicine and is also an academic,

said: "The civil society is up and kicking, but we're viewing the problem through a medical or surgical lens, which is inappropriate. Surgeon, academic and writer Dr Samiran Nundy argued that the only way forward is to make people in the industry more accountable, by enforcing the law strictly.

"I don't see anything improving otherwise. Not a single Indian doctor has been removed from the registry by the Medical Council of India (MCI) for misconduct or corruption. They are only suspended. If this is the attitude, how do you expect corruption to be eliminated from the system," asked Nundy. Shetty countered this by saying in many cases there's no alternative to such doctors, and that action cannot be initiated simply because there's nobody to replace them.

Need for more doctors

The discussion also delved into the need for more doctors, increased PG seats and regulations. Shetty, however, was quick to say: "You cannot have first-world regulation with third world infrastructure." Even as Shetty batted for less regulation, both Thelma and Nundy said everybody, including the private sector, must be made accountable.