

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE**

**LOK SABHA  
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3169  
TO BE ANSWERED ON THE 06<sup>th</sup> AUGUST, 2021**

**FREE MEDICINES TO POOR**

**3169. SHRI SANJAY JADHAV:  
SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE:  
SHRI ANURAG SHARMA:**

Will the Minister of **HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE** be pleased to state:

- a) whether the Government has rolled out any scheme to provide free medicines to poor and economically weaker sections of the society viz. SC, ST and such others;
- b) if so, the **details of the medicines procured for this purpose** during the last three years and the current year;
- c) whether the Government has entered into any arrangement in this regard with the States/UTs, if so, the details thereof;
- d) the targeted number of medicines including lifesaving drugs made available free of cost to the poor patients, **the funds utilized for the purpose** as on date and the extent to which the quality of such drugs procured is ensured; and
- e) the **other steps** taken by the Government to distribute lifesaving drugs and generic medicines free of cost to poor patients to enhance healthcare services?

**ANSWER**

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH & FAMILY  
WELFARE**

**(DR. BHARATI PRAVIN PAWAR)**

(a) to (e): “Public Health and Hospitals” being a State subject, the primary responsibility of strengthening public healthcare system including provision of free essential drugs that includes lifesaving drugs in public healthcare facilities, lies with the respective State Governments. However, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare provides technical and financial support to the States/UTs to strengthen the public healthcare system including support for ensuring sufficient supply of free essential drugs to be made available free of cost at public healthcare facilities towards the objective of providing accessible, affordable and quality healthcare to all those who access public health facilities including poor and economically weaker sections of the society viz. SC, ST and such others.

To ensure availability of essential drugs and reduce the Out of Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) of the patients visiting the public health facilities, Government has rolled out the Free Drugs Service Initiative (FDSI) under National Health Mission (NHM).

Under this, financial support is provided to States / UTs for provision of free essential medicines in public health facilities based on the requirements posted by them in their Programme Implementation Plans (PIPs) and within their overall resource envelope.

Support under the scheme is available for Procurement of drugs and strengthening /setting up robust systems of procurement, Quality Assurance, Supply chain management and warehousing, Prescription audit, grievance redressal, dissemination of Standard Treatment Guidelines and Establishment of IT enabled platform DVDMS (Drugs & Vaccine Distribution Management System) for monitoring the real time status of procurement and availability of essential medicines.

DVDMS is a web-based Supply Chain Management System that deals in purchase, supply, distribution and inventory management of various drugs and has an in-built provision of monitoring and checking the availability of medicine at all facilities at district and state level.

Further, Ministry has recommended facility wise Essential Medicines List (EML) to be made available at the public healthcare facilities. The number of drugs under EML at various levels of Public Healthcare facilities is as below:-

- i. Sub Health Centre Health & wellness centre (SHC-HWCs)– 105
- ii. Primary Health Centre Health & wellness centre (PHC-HWCs)- 172
- iii. Community Health Centres (CHCs)- 455
- iv. District Hospital (DHs)- 544

However, States have the flexibility to add more medicines and Essential Drugs List (EDL) of States vary from State to State stipulate that :-

Quality of drugs procured, under Free Drugs Service Initiative, is ensured through the operational guidelines of the initiative that

- i. All drugs must be sourced from Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) compliant manufacturers through robust procurement mechanism.
- ii. Post supply testing of every batch before distributing to the health facilities.

In addition to this, the States are encouraged to do prescription audit to improve the quality of care provided by the health facilities and also to ensure prescription of generic and rational use of drugs. Standard Treatment Guidelines (STGs) have been developed for ensuring rational use of drugs and preventing all forms of wastages.