

JAN SWASTHYA SAHYOG

Recipient of the Award for Application of Science and Technology for Rural Development – 2017

Registered: August 20, 1996

A group of All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) postgraduates and like-minded health professionals who shared a common interest, wanted to change the health and related situation in a region characterized by extreme poverty with no access to the most basic care in rural India. In 1999, they settled down in the eastern part of Madhya Pradesh, in Bilaspur district (now in Chhattisgarh), which predominantly had tribal and backward community. They decided to develop an effective, low-cost, high quality, community-based, health care system; that would be readily accessible to the rural poor and a model for the delivery of care in low-resource settings. Thus, Jan Swasthya Sahyog (JSS) started functioning in 1999, in Ganiyari village.

Objectives and Vision:

- To address the inequality in rural health care with equal focus on preventive measures and health education
- To provide clinical and community outreach program
- To adapt problem-based learning process
- To evolve low cost technology for providing appropriate, rational and low cost health care facilities
- To provide accessible, affordable, acceptable, quality-oriented, sustainable and credible services
- To work in the areas of training, research and advocacy
- To provide knowledge and technical expertise

Appropriate technologies: To cater to the needs of rural folks, the JSS team members designed the technologies, after understanding the people's conditions, requirements, limitations, illiteracy levels, accessibility, etc. JSS's mantra to success is curiosity to find, explore and learn; demystify health care technology and re-cast old ideas and techniques. They designed and developed grassroots technology and the distribution process was decentralized to reach the technology to the poor, through village health worker. Adaptable and diagnostic technologies are introduced to health workers, clinical, community level and public health services.

Products: Some of the products developed for the grass roots users and community health workers comprise diagnostic kits for urinary infections, pneumonia; prevention kit for diarrhoea outbreak with detection device for faecal contamination of drinking water; and modular kits for safe delivery and post-natal care of mother and child. A village First Aid kit has around thirty items including bamboo splints for fractures, a peripheral blood smear making slide kit box, an easy to read thermometer and a few disposable injection syringes. Another one is a kangaroo jacket serving as an incubator for premature babies, wherein the locally available palm oil is filled in the jacket. Other simplified devices are gel electrophoresis device for detecting sickle cell anaemia, technique for detecting haemoglobin, breath counter, portable stadiometer, spacer device, teaching stethoscope, UV light based steel drum for disinfecting water, interactive voice recorder (IVR) system for the patients residing in the interiors, etc.

Impact: The services of Jan Swasthya Sahyog has helped the tribal, migrant labourers, Dalits covering around eighteen lakh people of 3000 villages in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. They got home-based care for all the chronic illnesses. The antennal clinics for mother and crèche program for children below three years of age, has helped the community to improve their nutrition and significantly reduce malnourishment.

The in-patient services with 90 beds and an operation theatre complex at JSS has provided surgical services

to more than 32,000 patients and over 20,000 in-patients have been taken care for serious illnesses.

JSS has a 3-tier functioning system comprising village health workers in 70 villages, 3 primary health care sub centres catering to 225 villages in the vicinity and a referral centre providing secondary and tertiary level care for chronically ill and emergency patients..

Other Services: Activities like weekly mobile clinics, organic agricultural practices, millet cultivation have also been initiated by the team members of JSS. They have encouraged participation of people/NGOs/other Government and Non-Government Organisations and have successfully replicated programs like screening, care and palliation of cervical, breast and oral cancers, Phulwari and malaria program.

An audio-visual program 'Hospital talks to its people', sensitizes patients during their waiting period on matters related to basic health, sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, preventive measures for animal/insects bites, injury due to tree falls, electrocution, lightning strikes, drowning, etc.

Education, training and advocacy: JSS team members have been involved in primary health care and rational pharmaceutical policy advocacy, including tackling the issue of chronic hunger. They have been able to bring into effect policy changes to ensure better price control for essential drugs, at the national level.

JSS offers a three year Diplomate National Board in Family Medicine course, which is recognized by the National Board of Examinations (NBE). Medical residents are trained in general and emergency aspects of Medicine, Surgery, Paediatrics, and Obstetrics & Gynaecology. They are also taught about the intersection of illness and poverty, and they regularly engage in community health projects that seek to address some of the underlying issues of ill health. This has helped in community involvement and empowering the young.

With strength of over 200 people comprising of physicians, nurses, lab technicians, field program officers, trainers and support staff, JSS has emerged as a centre for good quality, low cost, comprehensive medical, surgical and obstetric care in the region. JSS's team is driven by one strong force which is 'compassion for the poor'.

Awards and Associations: Citation by Governor of Chhattisgarh, 2003

- Sri Krishnadevajajoo Punya Smriti Award, 2004
- Chhattisgarh Rajyotsava Recognition, 2005
- Tuberculosis Champion Award by the Partnership for Tuberculosis Care and Control

JSS is the Technical Resource Group for the Government of Chhattisgarh, the Planning Commission, and other agencies.

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