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COVID-19 Pandemic highlighted the need for public health specialists in India

Jaipur, May 19, 2021: The pandemic has caused major stress on the existing workforce with the second wave causing even a bigger disruption across the globe. The access is incomplete with the lack of public healthcare professionals. COVID-19 has allowed us to introspect on the lack of a healthcare workforce, the need for robust infrastructure. To highlight an understanding and the importance of Public Healthcare soon, IIHMR University hosted a counselling session on 'Career Opportunities in Public Health' to enrol for a Master of Public Health Programme. The MPH program is collaboratively offered by The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and IIHMR University, Jaipur. The session witnessed a participation of over 1000 candidates across the globe.' The counselling session was conducted by the panellists Dr. SD Gupta, Chairman, IIHMR University, Dr. DK Mangal, Professor, Advisor (SDG-SPH) and Dr.SutapaBandyopadhyay, Director, IIHMR Delhi.

"Today India is facing a grim situation where there is a major burden on the frontline workers and we sense this number is not enough to fight the battle in the current situation. Investment in Human Resource especially in the Public Healthcare setup shall only improvise the overall healthcare infrastructure, especially in public healthcare. COVID-19 has certainly increased numerous opportunities in the healthcare sector where diseases can be treated in hospitals but preventive care can only be provided by public healthcare. The density of the health workforce in India is not even half of the 44.5 health workers per 10,000 persons as recommended by the World Health Organization. Master of Public Health is a great career opportunity for those who seek to build a strong career with a major focus in Public Healthcare", said Dr. SD Gupta, Chairman IIHMR University.

Dr. SD Gupta, Chairman, IIHMR University, said, "The overarching goal of the MPH program is to provide students with a population perspective on Public Health. The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and IIHMR University's Cooperative MPH Program is designed to prepare students to overcome the current and emerging global public health problems such as the current issues of COVID-19 pandemic flu, AIDS, Obesity, Diabetes, Disparities to healthcare, Bioterrorism, etc. the program is the number 1 globally acclaimed off-shore program which offers an American Degree. Apart from the campus of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, the MPH program is only offered at the IIHMR University campus in Jaipur- India."

Dr.SutapaBandyopadhyay, Director, IIHMR Delhi said, "A few years ago it was laid that every District must have a Medical Health College. If this comes out to be true then every single Medical College can have a Public Health Department. Three domains that can be selected after the MPH program are Academics, Research or Public Health practice. Out of all the research publications that come out from India on the subject of health hardly 3.3% are devoted to the subject of public health. A lot of impetus and emphasis is now been given on how to promote Public Health in the country. Between 2009-2010, India has seen an annual research output in Public health increasing by 32%."

Dr.Sutapa further adds, "It is quite a sorry state of affair as 2/3rd of the publications were done because of the international collaborations which mean India does is not self-reliant in terms of researching on our own. Thus much focus is now given to research where we have competent professionals to research specific states, districts, even our own country. Much impetus is being given; hence, Research is one such area that MPH Program graduates can explore. Career in Research can influence policies, academic, programme management etc. The third career option is a practice which could be Govt. or Non-Govt."

Dr. DK Mangal, Professor, Advisor (SDGSPH) said, "There is no dearth of opportunities for qualified professionals in Public Health. Passion for looking at a broader aspect of health beyond individual health especially in the field of helping or serving people at large then this is the right career. COVID-19 has emphasized the importance of Public Health. To address calamities, we need public health interventions that can be implemented by trained Public Health professionals. These interventions halt the further transmissions and reverse the incidence or prevalence of any communicable diseases."

The eligibility criteria for the 2 years full-time Master of Public Health program with 86 credits is to be a graduate in Medical, BDS, BAMS, BHMS, Management, Microbiology, Biotechnology, Science, Commerce, Economics, Computer Science, Information Technology and other health-related disciplines can apply for this program. In addition, the candidate must have 2 years of work experience in health settings. Candidates with MBBS, MD, PhD degrees are exempted from appearing TOEFL and GRE. The program is accredited by CEPH, USA where MPH is in its 8th batch.

The program is offered at USD 70,000 which goes up to USD 100,000 in the USA. For the students in lower and middle-income countries especially from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Maldives the program is offered at USD 22,000. The fee of USD 22,000 includes tuition, travel and stay in Baltimore and the hostel fee at IIHMR University in Jaipur is separate. The students who have joined the MPH program will be awarded a degree by The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in collaboration with IIHMR University Jaipur. Courses at IIHMR University will be conducted on campus whereas those at JHU will be conducted online due to COVID-19 (however the mode of delivery is subjected to the Pandemic situation in both the counties).

Career role: Offers a broad responsibility to the public healthcare professional to improve healthcare services' quality and efficiency in different situations. Careers that can be explored after the MPH program would be Health Administrators, Medical and Health Services, Disaster Management Offices, Public Health Program Managers, NGO Management, Community Service Managers, Disease-Specific Health Specialists, Communications Manager for Public Health Program, Consultancy etc.

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