UHC achievable in India: Julio Frenk

Dr. Julio Frenk talks about the need for professional health workers and addressing imbalances in professional health education

Nidhi Misra

New Delhi: Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is achievable in India given the present growth trajectory of the country said Dr. Julio Frenk, dean, Harvard School of Public Health at the foundation day of the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) on Monday.

At a time when the 12th Five Year plan aims at providing affordable and quality healthcare to all citizens through a national health package that curbs the role of private insurance companies in healt care Dr.Frenk emphasised that the role of private insurance in UHC should be regulated by the government so the poor are protected from the economic burden of quality health care. “ Firstly, it is important for governments to set clear rules and guidelines so private insurance is affordable by the mass of the population”, Dr.Frenk said, “ Secondly, it should be largely financed by public money as is the case in most mature economies”.

The report on health coverage by the High Level Expert Group (HLEG) set up by the Planning Commission is based on ground level evidence that takes into account India’s growing population and shows the necessity for affordable health care said Dr. Frenk.

Dr. K.Srinath Reddy, chairman of the high-level expert group who was also present at the event pointed out that the report has provided an analytical framework for health care planners that was not present earlier. “ There has been an exchange of ideas between the group and the government that has led to a greater understanding for the necessity of a better public health care system”, said Dr.Reddy.

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Watch Dr. Julio Frenk talk about the need for professional health workers
According to Dr. Reddy, as per the recommendations of the HLEG there are some key areas that need maximum attention like, the abolition of user fee, strengthening primary healthcare, state and national level healthcare carders and a comprehensive national health package.

Dr. Frenk who will also be meeting the Minister of Health and Family Welfare said he hopes to strengthen ties between the Government and the Harvard School of Public Health to increase collaboration on the successful implementation of the UHC.

“Universal coverage is essential and possible in a growing economy like India’s. To maintain their current growth rate health becomes a necessary element”, Dr. Frenk said.