

Occasional News Wrap - #20/ July - September, 2025



Health Reforms and Policies: Driving Change in India and Beyond

July 01- September 30, 2025

Between July-September 2025, several developments underscored pressing issues and reforms in health and public welfare, both in India and globally. India's National Family Health Survey-5 revealed that 13 percent of children were born prematurely and 17 percent with low birth weight, with air pollution identified as a major risk factor. This highlights the urgent need for improved maternal healthcare and environmental interventions. Meanwhile, the government has taken steps to curb healthcare costs, including bringing the National Health Claims Exchange under joint oversight of the Ministry of Finance and Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) to prevent hospital overcharging for insured patients.

Public health advocacy continued to gain momentum. The WHO's AI for Good Summit 2025 explored the integration of artificial intelligence in healthcare, focusing on standardised guidelines, traditional medicine applications, and improving global access to health innovations. In India, preventive healthcare and lifestyle management were highlighted as essential, with experts urging communities to lead early screening and awareness initiatives to reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. Reinforcing this, the FSSAI's Front-of-Pack Labelling (FOPL) policy and mandatory warning labels aim to help consumers make informed dietary choices, while extensions in implementation deadlines reflect the need for clear communication to curb diet-related health risks.

Regulatory and safety measures also advanced during this period. FSSAI mandated QR codes in food establishments for transparency, introduced pre-licence inspections for bottled water, and released a definitive list of Ayurveda Aahara to mainstream traditional nutrition. Yet, challenges persist, including healthcare strikes in rural Chhattisgarh, conviction gaps in food adulteration cases in Rajasthan, and implementation gaps in schemes like Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY, highlighting systemic hurdles in achieving universal healthcare access. Globally, NCDs account for 75 percent of deaths, underscoring the importance of prevention and early intervention.

Collectively, this quarter underscores the interplay of policy, regulation, technology, and community action in improving health outcomes, ensuring access, and addressing emerging challenges in both preventive and curative healthcare.

S.N.	Article/Op-ed	Key Takeaway
1.	India's Health Survey Data Reveals 13% Children Born Prematurely, 17% with Low Birth Weight <i>The Hindu</i> July 03, 2025	A recent study using India's National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-21) revealed that 13 percent of children were born prematurely, and 17 percent with low birth weight. The study highlights that air pollution, particularly exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5) during pregnancy, significantly increases the risk of these adverse birth outcomes. Researchers emphasised that improving air quality and maternal healthcare access is crucial in reducing neonatal health risks and achieving India's child health targets.
2.	India Plans a Big Step to Curb Overcharging by Healthcare Providers <i>Riya R Alex</i> <i>Livermint</i> July 10, 2025	The Indian government plans to bring the National Health Claims Exchange under the joint oversight of the Ministry of Finance and IRDAI to prevent hospital overcharging particularly for insured patients. With healthcare expenses in India projected to rise by 13 percent in 2025, the government seeks to enhance regulatory supervision of claims portal to promote transparency, standardise treatment rates, and prevent inflated billing by healthcare providers.
3.	AI for Good Summit 2025 – Enabling AI for Health Innovation and Access <i>World Health Organisation</i> July 11, 2025	The AI for Good Summit 2025 hosted by WHO, in collaboration with ITU and WIPO in Geneva, on July 11, 2025 focused on advancing AI for health innovation and access. The workshop aimed to develop standardised AI4H guidelines, showcase real-world healthcare applications, and explore the intersection of AI, policy, and intellectual property. It also previewed WHO's upcoming Technical Brief on AI in Traditional Medicine.
4.	Preventive Healthcare is the Way Forward <i>Times of India</i> July 15, 2025	This article emphasises the importance of shifting focus from curative to preventive healthcare. Experts highlighted that investing in prevention, such as early screening and lifestyle modifications, is essential to reduce disease burden and healthcare costs. Dr. Sultan Pradhan of CanCare Trust emphasised that communities, rather than hospitals, should lead efforts in promoting lifestyle changes. Dr. P Raghu Ram of the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation advocated for utilising CSR funds for early detection initiatives.

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5.	India Needs to Offer Tax Incentives, Push Health Startups to Make Country Global Medical Hub <i>The Economics Times</i> July 17, 2025	A report by FHRAI and KPMG recommends that India offer tax incentives, insurance portability, and support for health-tech startups to develop the country as a global medical and wellness hub by 2035. It highlights the need for branding campaigns, skill training, and expanded medical infrastructure to tap into the rapidly growing medical tourism market.
6.	489 People Convicted for Food Adulteration in 3 Months. <i>Syed Intishab Ali</i> <i>The Times of India</i> July 21, 2025	In Rajasthan, 489 people were convicted for food adulteration between April-June 2025, following 3,432 inspections and 998 filed cases. While the state has strengthened monitoring and awareness efforts, 1,583 cases remain pending, highlighting the need for faster adjudication.
7.	Delhi CM Launches Health Initiatives to Offer Patients Timely Care <i>The Hindu</i> July 25, 2025	Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has launched several initiatives to enhance the city's healthcare system. These include the expanded Health Information Management System (HIMS), which allows online appointment bookings and integrates over 93 lakh Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) IDs for centralised patient records. Additionally, 34 Ayushman Mandirs and 8 Jan Aushadhi Kendras have been inaugurated to provide accessible primary healthcare services and affordable medicines. Gupta emphasised that these efforts aim to make Delhi a hub for super-specialty healthcare, contrasting with previous administrations' unfulfilled promises.
8.	How New Federal Legislation Will Affect Health Care Costs and Access for Americans <i>Aliza Rosen</i>	The article discusses significant alterations introduced by the 2025 Budget Reconciliation Act (also known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act), which enacts over US\$1tn in healthcare spending cuts through 2034, marking the largest reduction to the U.S. social safety net in history. Key changes include Medicaid work requirements, effective January 01, 2027, requiring most Medicaid recipients aged 19-64 to complete at least 80 hours per month of work, volunteering, or education to maintain coverage, as well as eligibility adjustments for Medicaid, Medicare, and

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	<i>Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health July 30, 2025</i>	Affordable Care Act plans, potentially increasing healthcare costs for Americans. The impact on coverage could be substantial, with estimates from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities suggesting up to 15 million more uninsured individuals by 2034.
9.	FSSAI Releases Definitive List of ‘Ayurveda Aahara’ to Mainstream Time-Honoured Food Wisdom <i>News On AIR August 03, 2025</i>	The FSSAI, in collaboration with the Ministry of Ayush, has released a definitive list of Ayurveda Aahara, traditional Ayurvedic food preparations. This initiative aims to integrate time-honoured dietary wisdom into mainstream nutrition by providing clear guidelines for food businesses. The list, aligned with the Food Safety and Standards (Ayurveda Aahara) Regulations 2022, offers a credible reference for manufacturing and labeling these products. Minister of State for Ayush, Prataprao Jadhav, encourages citizens to incorporate Ayurveda Aahara into their daily diets to enhance immunity, digestion, and overall well-being.
10.	FSSAI Mandates QR Codes in Restaurants for Instant Complaints and Transparency from August <i>The Logical Indian August 04, 2025</i>	From August 2025, the FSSAI requires all food businesses, restaurants, cafes, cloud kitchens, and food trucks — to display their licence and a QR code linked to the Food Safety Connect App. This allows consumers to verify licences and report food safety or hygiene issues in real time. Non-compliance may lead to penalties or licence suspension.
11.	SBI Committed to Improving India’s Healthcare Ecosystem <i>Times of India August 19, 2025</i>	The State Bank of India (SBI), through its CSR arm, the SBI Foundation, has pledged ₹9.98 crore to establish a pediatric cardiac operating theatre and intensive care unit at the Saloni Heart Centre in SGPGIMS, Lucknow. This initiative aims to facilitate life-saving surgeries for approximately 300 children annually and provide training for over 200 healthcare professionals, including surgeons, anesthetists, nurses, and technologists. The project underscores SBI's commitment to enhancing India's healthcare ecosystem.

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12.	India Bottle Water Boom Meets a Safety Overhaul <i>Priyanka Sharma</i> <i>The Mint</i> <i>August 21, 2025</i>	<u>India's bottled water industry</u>, valued at approximately US\$9.5bn in 2024-25, is undergoing significant regulatory changes. The FSSAI has mandated that, starting August 2025, all new bottled water manufacturers must undergo mandatory pre-licence inspections of their packaging facilities. This move classifies packaged drinking water as a "high-risk" food category, aligning it with other products like milk and meat that require stringent oversight. Existing licensed manufacturers will now be subject to annual audits and risk-based inspections to ensure compliance with enhanced safety and quality standards. The policy aims to address growing concerns over counterfeit bottled water and ensure public health safety. Major brands like Bisleri, Aquafina, and Himalayan have expressed support for these measures, emphasising their commitment to maintaining high-quality standards.
13.	Thousands May Lose Cashless Treatment as Hospital Body to Suspend Services of Bajaj Allianz, Care Health Insurance <i>George Mathew</i> <i>The Indian Express</i> <i>August 31, 2025</i>	The <u>Association of Healthcare Providers (India)</u> (AHPI) has decided to suspend cashless hospitalisation services for policyholders of Bajaj Allianz General Insurance and Care Health Insurance starting September 01, 2025. This move could affect thousands of health policyholders, disrupting their access to cashless medical treatment. The General Insurance Council (GI Council) has criticised AHPI's decision as sudden and unilateral, warning that it undermines public trust in the health insurance ecosystem and could lead to increased out-of-pocket expenses for patients, especially in emergency situations. The dispute centers on issues such as outdated reimbursement rates and delays in claim settlements, with AHPI alleging that Bajaj Allianz has rejected proposals to revise hospital tariffs in line with medical inflation. The GI Council has urged AHPI to withdraw its advisory and engage in constructive dialogue to resolve the matter..

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14.	How New Federal Legislation Will Affect Health Care Costs and Access for Americans <i>Priyanka Sharma</i> <i>The Mint</i> <i>August 26, 2025</i>	India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is developing a policy titled "Transition of Care for Youth with Special Healthcare Needs" to facilitate the shift of young individuals with chronic conditions, such as thalassemia and diabetes, from pediatric to adult healthcare systems. This initiative aims to address the medical, psychosocial, and educational needs of these youths after they turn 18, ensuring continuity of care and better health outcomes. The government has directed all states and Union Territories to implement this policy to enhance the lifelong functioning and potential of youth with special healthcare needs.
15.	India FSSAI FOPL Warning Labels Health Food Packages <i>Priyanka Sharma</i> <i>The Mint</i> <i>September 01, 2025</i>	India's Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSAI) is set to implement bold front-of-pack warning labels (FOPL) on packaged foods to combat rising lifestyle diseases like obesity, diabetes, and heart ailments. The new labels will highlight high levels of salt, sugar, and fat, enabling consumers to make informed choices. Drawing inspiration from successful models in countries like Chile, Israel, and Brazil, the FSSAI aims to encourage healthier eating habits and prompt food manufacturers to reformulate products. The initiative is part of a broader effort to address India's growing public health challenges associated with non-communicable diseases.
16.	Zero GST on Life & Health Insurance: Who Benefits and How? <i>Shreya Goswami</i> <i>NDTV</i> <i>September 05, 2025</i>	The article reports that from September 2025, all individual life and health insurance premiums in India will have 0 percent GST, down from 18 percent, making insurance more affordable and accessible. The exemption covers term plans, ULIPs, endowment policies, and individual health plans (including family floater and senior citizen policies), as well as reinsurance, but excludes group policies. For example, a ₹20,000 premium that previously included ₹3,600 GST will now cost ₹20,000, lowering barriers for first-time buyers and upgrades.

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17.	IIT BHU Hosts FSSAI Food-Safety Training Programme for Mess And Canteen Operators <i>Binay Singh</i> <i>The Times of India</i> <i>September 10, 2025</i>	The Indian Institute of Technology (BHU) Varanasi hosted a Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC) programme organised by the FSSAI. The training aimed to enhance food safety practices in the institute's hostels and canteens. Mess and canteen operators, along with their managers, participated in the session, which emphasised standardised food handling procedures. The programme was inaugurated by Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council of Wardens. R K. Singh emphasised the importance of periodic training to ensure the continuous supply of safe and hygienic food to students.
18.	As Food Labelling Deadline Approaches, Advocate Push For Clear Warnings <i>Food Manifest</i> <i>September 13, 2025</i>	India's FSSAI has been granted a final three-month extension by the Supreme Court to finalise its recommendations on mandatory OPL. Healthcare experts and NGOs are urging immediate action, emphasising that clear, pictorial warning labels are essential to combat the rising prevalence of diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Advocates argue that simple, understandable labels can empower consumers to make healthier food choices and reduce the health burden associated with processed foods.
19.	Ayushman Bharat PMJAY: A Health Scheme that Needs Healing <i>Vedaant Lakhera & Vitasta Kaul</i> <i>The Indian Express</i> <i>September 19, 2025</i>	The Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), launched in 2018 to provide up to ₹5 lakh per year for secondary and tertiary hospitalisation to the bottom 40 percent's population, has been hailed by leaders like PM Modi and Amit Shah as transformative for public healthcare. However, real-world experiences reveal gaps in implementation, with cases of denied hospital admissions and benefits, sometimes resulting in patient deaths, raising questions about the scheme's effectiveness in ensuring universal health coverage.

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20.	Noncommunicable Diseases Fact Sheet <i>World Health Organisation</i> <i>September 25, 2025</i>	The WHO reports that NCDs, such as heart disease, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes cause about 43 million deaths annually, or 75 percent of global deaths. Most premature deaths (under age 70) occur in low- and middle-income countries. Major risk factors include tobacco use, poor diet, physical inactivity, alcohol use, and air pollution, making prevention and early treatment crucial to reducing the global NCD burden.
21.	Strike in Rural India Underscores Global Dependence on ‘Precarious’ Health Workers <i>Arsalan Bukhari</i> <i>Health Policy Watch</i> <i>September 30, 2025</i>	The article discusses a significant strike by nearly 16,000 staff employed under India's National Health Mission (NHM) in Chhattisgarh. The strike escalated in early September when the state government dismissed 25 union leaders, leading to the mass resignation of over 14,000 health workers. This unrest has raised concerns about the stability of healthcare in the predominantly rural state, home to 32 million people. The protesting workers are demanding permanent contracts, pay parity with regular staff, and improved benefits. Experts warn that if the strike continues, essential services like immunisation, maternal health, and disease control programmes could face severe disruption, particularly in remote tribal districts.