

# Unhealthy at 65: India has 76% shortfall in govt docs

## Public Health System Hit By Low Spending

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After spending around 1% of gross domestic product (GDP) on health in the past five years, the government is proposing an increase in public spending by half a percentage point to make it 1.58% for the coming five years (2012-17) under the 12th Plan. This is what the draft chapter on health in

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the Plan document says.

But health experts and activists are up in arms at this meagre increase because even the Planning Commission's high-level expert group and the steering committee on drafting the Plan had suggested that pu-

## THE DOCTOR IS NOT IN

	Target	Actual	Shortfall (%)
Doctors	1,09,484	26,329	76
Specialists	58,352	6,935	88
Nurses	1,38,623	65,344	53
Radiographers	14,588	2,221	85
Lab technicians	80,308	16,208	80

Source: Rural Health Statistics 2011 in 12th Plan draft chapter



blic health spend be at least 2.5% of the GDP.

The Planning Commission's own analysis of the state of the country's healthcare system reveals the rot within. The rural health statistics for 2011 show a shocking shortfall in human resources, be it doctors, nurses or other healthcare personnel. According to the Planning Commission's draft, the government-run healthcare system is hamstrung because the number of doctors is short of

the target by a jaw-dropping 76%, there are 53% fewer nurses, specialist doctors are short by 88%, radiographers by 85% and laboratory technicians by 80%.

While infrastructure is poor from the sub-centre to the community health centre (CHC) level, what the shortage of personnel means is that in many states where infrastructure is largely present, the absence of doctors and nurses renders the whole facility meaningless. Thus, Gujarat

has only a 5% shortfall of CHCs but only 76 out of 1,220 specialists required are available for the existing CHCs. In Odisha, there are 377 CHCs although only 327 are required as per norms. But of the 1,570 specialists required to man these CHCs, only 438 are in place.

This is the situation after the government spent Rs 33,390 crore—52% of its total NRHM budget—on human resources.

The picture is grim when it comes to physical infrastructure too, consisting of the gigantic network of health sub-centres (SCs), primary health centres, CHCs and district hospitals. India is supposed to have 1,78,267 SCs on the basis of about 1 per 1,000 population. In reality, there are only 1,48,124—about 17% short. Even among the functional ones, more than 40,000 are working out of rented buildings; buildings for 13,000 sub-centres are still being constructed.