


Managing Endocrine disorders amidst the financial crisis in Sri Lanka

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Sri Lanka despite being a developing nation has always maintained health indices on par with the most developed countries. We have achieved high life expectancy, and lower maternal and infant death rates and have completely eradicated many diseases such as polio, malaria, and filariasis.

Sri Lanka has a free national healthcare system, in which the majority of the inpatient care (90%) and a significant proportion of outpatient care (50%) is provided by the public sector. The role played by the private sector in health is steadily growing, but still remains inaccessible to a major fraction of the population who find it difficult to afford the high costs. Government expenditure in Sri Lankan healthcare as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) was 1.7% during 2013-2016. Since the Ministry of Health is the main health provider it procures, stores, and distributes all required medicines, vaccines, consumables, reagents, and commodities to all hospitals managed by the government.

Currently, Sri Lanka is in the midst of its worst economic crisis in history. The country imports around 85% of its medical supplies. The shortage of US dollars leading to import restrictions has affected the supply chains and distribution systems, leading to serious and severe shortage of critical and lifesaving items needed to maintain health services in our country. Therefore, already hospitals are forced to suspend or postpone routine non-essential operations, medical procedures and certain laboratory tests to save stocks to be used in case of emergency.

Endocrine Care in Sri Lanka has always been at a commendable height keeping in line with our regional counterparts. Diabetes mellitus is the most common endocrine disorder in Sri Lanka with almost 10% of the Sri Lankan population and 18% of the urban population being affected by it. Hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism, pituitary and

adrenal disorders and osteoporosis are the other endocrine disorders whose management cannot be compromised whatever the reason.

If Sri Lanka's healthcare situation needs to be improved, the supply chain should be restored immediately which needs urgent and immediate access to US dollar resources which is not possible without the help from the international community. If shortages are not replenished immediately, we may have to face dire consequences.

An international appeal by the Sri Lankan Government as well as different organizations including Sri Lanka Medical Association, Ceylon College of Physicians and other professional colleges is in place for generous support at this crucial time to continue the patient care services in Sri Lanka. This needs to be within the quality assurance mechanism for drugs and equipment of the Ministry of Health to make sure the patients' lives are not put at risk.

Sri Lanka College of Endocrinologists has now put forward a "SECURE DIABETES CARE FUND" to invite donors nationally and internationally to volunteer to help patients with Endocrine Disorders in Sri Lanka. Funds will be allocated to hospitals in need through an action committee, working closely with the Ministry of Health to identify the requirements in the endocrine units in government health care institutions.

We earnestly request all, both in Sri Lanka and abroad to generously contribute to the above fund so that Endocrine care in Sri Lanka wouldn't be compromised. This is the need of the hour and we hope with the political stability, things will improve gradually.

Joint Editors
SJDEM

Contributions can be sent to:

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For further details please refer the Sri Lanka College of Endocrinologists Facebook page or contact the College office directly on 0112693055.