


ROLE OF PATIENT ADVOCACY AND PATIENT SUPPORT GROUPS IN GUIDING PATIENTS AND CAREGIVERS THROUGH PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES



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ABSTRACT

The switch in lifestyle has resulted in a drastic change in the incidence and occurrence of diseases in India. With changing times, the demand for healthcare and related issues has also increased manifold. Like doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and paramedics, patient advocacy groups (PAGs), and patient support groups (PSGs) have become an integral part of our healthcare system. These groups not just provide care and attention to the patients, but also increase the transparency and credibility of the healthcare system. As they bridge the gap between patients and physicians, they are recognized as liaisons. They aide the patients, caregivers, and family members by providing moral, emotional, financial, social, and educational support using first-hand information. This descriptive study will give us an idea about the current status of this industry and suggest measures and practices that will help in revolutionizing this area by taking thoughts and references from the healthcare system of other developed countries like the USA. It will also focus on how some of the MNC and Indian pharmaceutical companies in India have helped improve the Indian healthcare scenario by connecting doctors with patients.



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INTRODUCTION

Patient advocates are the liaisons between patients and healthcare workers, like doctors, nurses, amongst others, to provide care and improve patients' quality of life (Shah; Garg, 2011). They have listed various types of patient advocates, such as:

1. Advocates for Layman: A patient concerned about their disease state or a relative bothered about the patient's welfare.
2. Nursing and patient advocacy: It is the care, support, and security provided by nurses.
3. Professional individual patient advocate: It includes those organizations that provide paid patient advocacy services.
4. Governmental agencies: These Central and State agencies supervise the healthcare workers by certifying and reporting issues that can be helpful to patients.

Patient support groups and patient advocacy groups are significant aspects modern of the contemporary healthcare system. PSGs are a peer-based group of people with similar health experiences and concerns. They empower self-advocacy, advise lifestyle and coping mechanisms, provide emotional and moral support, reduce feelings of isolation, and increase public awareness about the health condition (Margaret F. Keil, 2018).

There are various patient support groups such as TRIOMPH (Transplant Recipients of India and Organ failure patients – a Movement to Provide Hope), Cure SMA Foundation, Friends of Max (FOM), Cancer Winners Club, Brain Tumor Support Group, Pink Hope Patient Support Group, Saahasa, Astha Breast Cancer Support Group, Ugam, among others are operating in India.

PAGs are generally non-profit organizations that act as a bridge between the patients and healthcare workers to provide moral, emotional, financial, social, and educational support.



PAGs help patients, family members, and relatives understand the disease state and diagnostic tests, choose proper therapies, manage finance, raise funds, and assist in insurance. There are various patient advocacy groups like CARES Foundation, CSS Patient Group, Komen Advocacy Alliance, and Alagille Syndrome Alliance; however, considering the massive population of India, much work needs to be done to improve the quality of the healthcare system.

Patient-centric care focuses on recognizing and respecting patients' preferences in caregiving. The patients have an equal say in critical decisions in care and treatment. However, the quality of the doctor-patient relationship in India is not very healthy because doctors do not have enough time to attend to all the patients' queries. As PAGs are hardly present in India, patient-centric care is a good place for pharmaceutical companies to start. Pharmaceutical companies can create support programs, raise awareness, provide educational material about symptoms, causes, risk factors, prevention, treatment, and side effects of drugs, bridge the doctor-patient care gap, and provide moral and emotional support (Hattangadi, 2015).

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the need for patient support groups and patient advocacy groups in India.
2. To study the programs run by MNC and Indian pharmaceutical companies in improving the Indian healthcare scenario.
3. To suggest measures and practices that will help revolutionize the Indian healthcare scenario by taking thoughts and references from the healthcare system of other developed countries like the USA.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study "**Patient advocacy groups: Need and opportunity in India**" (Shah; Garg, 2011) gives a holistic view of PAGs in India. PAGs communicate with the media to sensitize people about the practical value of public health, which helps identify the root cause of diseases and plan preventive and corrective actions accordingly. PAGs also play a significant part in influencing the government to modify existing healthcare policies according to the country's health status. Their indispensable role in healthcare research benefits companies as they promote research, develop research protocols, facilitate patient participation and convey the results comprehensibly. The PAGs can collaborate with healthcare workers and



pharmaceutical companies to describe the symptoms, causes, prevention, and treatments of diseases and aid in informed decisions concerning new treatments, healthcare insurance, cost benefits, medical adherence, and management of side effects of drugs. Educational institutions should design specialized courses in patient-centric care and motivate students to pursue it as their career. The Government should increase its workforce, focus on research, and formulate balanced policies for the healthcare sector.

The study “Patient Support Groups are an Important Component of Your Toolbox for Patient Education” (Margaret F. Keil, 2018) describes the effectiveness of PSGs. PSGs improve health outcomes, reduce mood disturbances, improve patients' quality of life, reduce chances of hospitalization, and promote self-management of conditions. Nowadays, crowdsourcing in the form of research projects like PregSource and websites like PatientsLikeMe has gained momentum as it is not only used by patients and caregivers for education and support but also by healthcare workers for diagnosis and treatment. Nurses act as effective advocates to support patients, family members, and caregivers not just by providing medical assistance but also by guiding them to a PSG that matches their needs.

According to a study titled “The effectiveness of support groups: a literature review” (Worrall et al., 2018), support groups can also be known as self-help groups, mutual-aid groups, peer-led support groups, consumer-led support groups, and family-led support groups. GROW is an international mutual help program that supports a network of mental health support groups to improve patient's quality of life with severe mental illness. This, in turn, boosts the confidence, self-reliance, spiritual well-being, self-efficacy, and self-esteem of the patients, which eventually leads to a speedy recovery. In 2005, there were 800+ active GROW groups worldwide. These caregiver support groups aim to educate the patient and caregiver to increase knowledge and understanding of the disease. They also provide emotional support and create an atmosphere of mutual trust to facilitate the honest sharing of feelings.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach: The case study approach and qualitative research are used, which involves systematically collecting and recording the contents and thematic secondary information analysis from various programs run by pharmaceutical companies.

Exploratory and Descriptive Research Design: The research study is exploratory and descriptive because it explores the existence of patient advocacy, support programs, and activities of the various pharmaceutical companies in India to create awareness and educate



about the symptoms and other related problems concerning chronic and lifestyle-related illnesses. The studies also explored their activities to educate and guide the doctors for better diagnosing of the disease and prescribe appropriate therapeutic and medical interventions to restore the normalcy and quicker recovery of patients for a better quality of life. The activities of the pharmaceutical companies also involved guiding the doctors in advising the patients to adhere to medications, lifestyle and dietary modification, and exercise for the long-term sustainability of good health. The drug companies analyze the research data obtained from clinical trials and other field information to improve the quality of health outcomes of the suffering patients by following a patient-centric approach and not merely treating the disease. The companies also guide the physicians and patient groups, and caregivers on the effectiveness and the handling of tolerable side effects of the drug formulation for adherence to prescribed medication for better cure and recovery. This helped gather secondary data and information that describes programs; it also contains information about events regarding the status of the patient support groups and patient advocacy groups.

Sample Design: The few relevant sample cases regarding such programs were considered for MNC and Indian pharmaceutical companies operating in India for the last 30 – 40 years that are available over published sources.

Data Collection: The research made use of secondary data. For secondary data collection, a systematic and comprehensive quality search of review articles, research papers, company websites, press releases, and scientific journals was done.

Period of Study: March 2022 to July 2022; sources are spread across months span so that a detailed study can be done.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS OF CASES

The growing demand for modern drugs has opened doors for pharmaceutical companies to expand their market by selling commercially viable medicines to the rural population of India.

1. In 2007, Novartis started the '**Arogya Parivar**' program (which translates to Healthy Family in Hindi) in 11 states across India. It is an essential public health tool that aims at raising awareness about communicable and non-communicable diseases to improve health literacy, make doctors available even to the poorest, and providing commercially viable medicines (80 pharmaceutical, generic, and over-the-counter (OTC) products and vaccines) to the under-privileged rural population of India. Arogya Parivar became



self-sustainable within 30 months of its launch and currently covers 181 Districts, 33,000 villages, 257 cells, and employs 24,000 doctors and 24,000 pharmacies. The award-winning Arogya Parivar has reached more than 36 million Indians through free health camps, doctor consultations, and health education sessions. Locally recruited health educators, generally, women, raise awareness about diseases, preventive health measures and refer sick people to doctors. Doctors collaborate with local teams and pharmacies to organize health camps using mobile clinics that provide access to screening, diagnosis, preventive care, and treatment. The impact and success of the program are attributed to its six pillars: Awareness, Availability, Affordability, Adaptability, Adherence, and Alliances.

2. According to the Thyroid Epidemiological Study, one in 10 adults is affected by hypothyroidism in India (Unnikrishnan et al., 2013). Under the '**Make India Thyroid Aware**' program, Abbott, in partnership with the Indian Thyroid Society, conducted a thyroid awareness initiative to raise awareness about the symptoms, causes, treatment, and importance of testing for thyroid disorders. As hypothyroidism is three times more prevalent in women (especially pregnant women) than in men, they are at the heart of this campaign. Hypothyroidism can lead to hyperlipidemia, hypertension, decreased fertility, depression, and placental abnormalities in pregnant women. Due to these confusing and joint symptoms, thyroid disorders are very challenging to diagnose. The Make India Thyroid Aware campaign has reached more than 15 lakh Indians residing in Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh.
3. In 2015, Roche India launched '**The Blue Tree**' program to support cancer patients overcome the hurdles in diagnosis and treatment. The program not only ensures disease awareness and testing, but also funding solutions, adherence support, standardized reports, and home delivery of drugs. The program coordinators educate the patients with reliable information on five types of cancers (lung, breast, cervical, ovarian, and colorectal) in nine different languages. They also arrange for follow-up calls and delivery of medicines to the patient's homes. Moreover, free biomarker tests are supplied to doctors to diagnose patients who cannot afford to pay for them. This pan-oncology patient support initiative has helped over 7000 low-income patients and saw a 40% rise in therapy adherence rates. Roche aims to add more services and increase access to medicines in low- and middle-income countries to double their number of patients by 2026.



4. In the 1980s, Novo Nordisk entered India; at that time, diabetes was a niche therapy. Over the years, Novo Nordisk launched the '**Changing Diabetes Barometer**' program under their social responsibility strategy of Defeat Diabetes. This program has not only reached 7.6 lakh diabetic patients but also doctors, paramedics, and community diabetes centers. It aims to improve the quality of diabetes care by reducing complications and socio-economic costs. It has also played a significant role in physician education by introducing tools for doctors to formulate novel ways to improve the quality of care. The company is focused on providing low-cost generic human insulin to cater to the needs of different income groups. They have emphasized measuring key indicators, like HbA1c, BP, lipids, and BMI to look beyond medicinal treatments and focus on the use of lifestyle modifications to control diabetes. They have collaborated with stakeholders like doctors, patients, academics, patient organizations (PAGs and PSGs), governments, industry, and media.
5. Tuberculosis is a preventable disease, yet, it kills one person every minute in India. Globally, India accounted for 26% of the incident TB cases in 2020. This is due to stigma and lack of awareness. Surprisingly, the majority of TB cases are reported among the youth of the country. Due to the emergence of drug-resistant TB, it has become even more challenging to treat. In 2020, Johnson & Johnson collaborated with The MTV Staying Alive Foundation to launch a youth-focused edutainment campaign, '**MTV Nishedh**'. It was aimed to reduce the stigma around critical diseases like tuberculosis and social issues faced by the youth. MTV Nishedh was a 13-part drama series, portraying the struggles and triumphs of two characters with TB. It aimed to inform people about the signs and symptoms of TB, debunk common myths, encourage the diseased to seek care, and reduce the social stigma. In 2022, Johnson & Johnson launched the '**Be The Change For TB**' initiative with the Union Ministry of Health's Central TB Division and the United States Agency for International Development. This program is part of Johnson & Johnson's 10-year initiative toward the UN Sustainable Development Goal of eradicating TB by 2030. As undiagnosed tuberculosis is a significant issue in India, 30% of India's total TB cases are in the 18-30 age group. The program aims to create youth changemakers to increase awareness about the disease and build youth participation and engagement. Although the program has reached over 35 million people across TV and radio, India is still far from achieving its target.



6. Just ahead of World Brain Day (July 22, 2022), Boehringer Ingelheim India commissioned a consumer survey conducted by IPSOS on brain stroke titled 'The State of Stroke: A Survey on Awareness About Stroke in Urban India.' It revealed that less than 1 in 4 Indians are aware of the symptoms of brain stroke. Brain stroke is India's second most common cause of casualty, affecting 18 lakh Indians a year. After that, Boehringer Ingelheim India started an online program, 'Stroke of Support,' by launching an information website, www.strokeofsupport.com. The website provides insightful information on the symptoms, warning signs, risk factors, diagnosis, and management of brain stroke for both the patient and caregivers. It also helps to locate the nearest Stroke Ready Centres or hospitals equipped to provide emergency stroke care.
7. In 2020, Allergan, in collaboration with the Sightsavers, and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), launched a joint initiative, '**Keep Sight India**' in Ganjam District of Odisha. The program aimed to tackle one of the leading causes of avoidable blindness, glaucoma. Allergan holds a strong position in all major disease segments within eye care and is known for developing novel approaches to prevent irreversible blindness caused by glaucoma. Unfortunately, due to a lack of resources, inadequate training, insufficient human resources, and poor health infrastructures, glaucoma is the leading cause of irreversible blindness in India. Due to the lack of knowledge of glaucoma, over 90% of cases remain undiagnosed in India. The program will raise community awareness by carrying out eye screening. Finally, it will test the behavioral change within affected populations. Keep Sight India will also train health workers to screen, diagnose and provide care to those at risk. The final aim is to strengthen the health system of India to integrate eye care services into the country's health services.
8. AstraZeneca is a leading biotechnology company focusing on enabling patient-centric solutions for the management of diseases. In 2020, AstraZeneca India signed a memorandum of understanding with the Research Society for Study of Diabetes in India (RSSDI) to raise awareness of diabetes amongst people by leveraging social media and digital platforms. As per the International Diabetes Foundation Atlas on Diabetes, 1 in 11 people in South Asia have diabetes. Moreover, by 2030, India will be home to around 11.5 crore diabetic patients. AstraZeneca India launched a three-year patient awareness program, '**Beyond Sugar**', to benefit over one crore diabetic Indians by 2030. The campaign aimed to empower patients and caregivers through conversations around diabetes, diagnosis, treatment, and management of the disease.



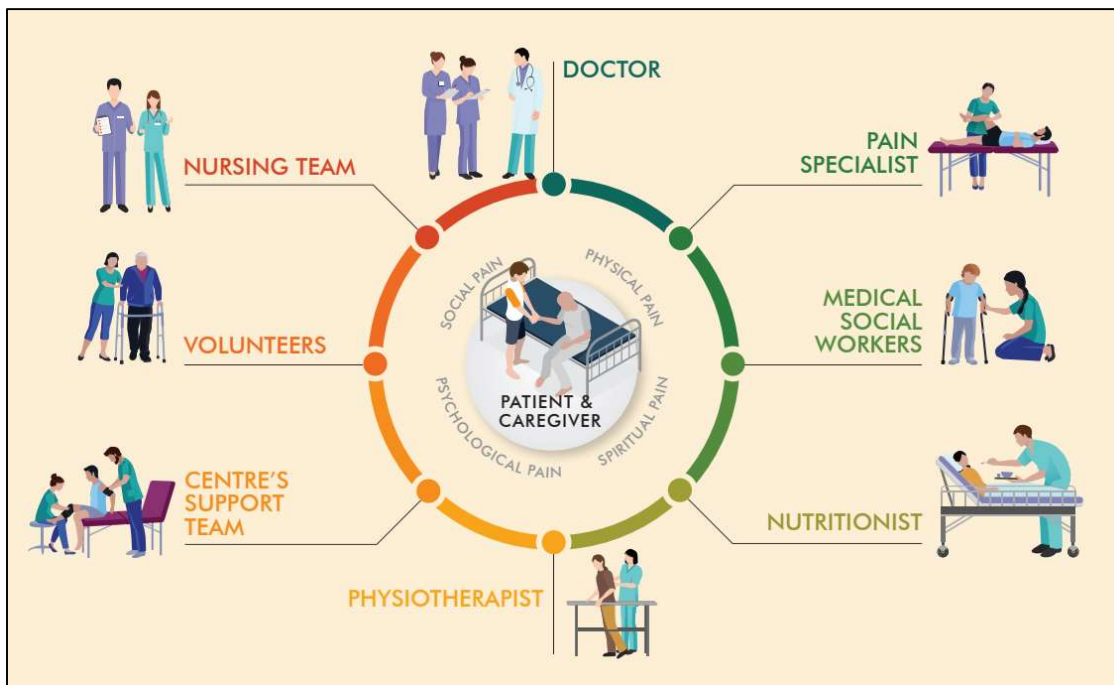
9. Dr. Reddy's Laboratories is a domestic pharmaceutical company committed to providing affordable and innovative healthcare solutions. They have launched many support programs for bridging the doctor-patient care gap. 'SPARSH' is a financial assistance program that provides complete chemotherapy treatment to deprived cancer patients. It has benefited over 6,000 patients. 'MITR' is a support program for cancer patients to discuss their feelings and concerns. It is a toll-free helpline where patients can seek guidance from professional psychologists. Indian men and women face severe hair loss, for which they came up with 'ASSIST', a hair loss awareness program that helps connect patients to qualified dermatologists for medical advice. Prostate cancer is the second leading type of cancer in males (Jain et al., 2014); therefore, Dr. Reddy's launched 'SAHYOG', a patient support program for prostate cancer patients that provides diagnostic support, doctor visit reminders, information guides, and health and diet tips. 'CHEER' or Committed to Help, Educate and Encourage Renal patients, is a support program for chronic kidney disease (CKD) patients. It aims to assist at all levels, such as nutrition and diet, medical adherence, lifestyle changes, and stress management. Tobacco usage has drastically increased among the young adults of India; to raise awareness of the same, they launched an anti-tobacco drive, 'Save the Gen Next', to fulfil the dream of a tobacco-free India. They reached out to children, adolescents, and teenagers in schools and colleges to spread awareness and sensitize them about the harmful effects of tobacco.
10. In 2016, Sun Pharmaceuticals partnered with the Indian Council of Medical Research for the '**Malaria Elimination Demonstration Project**' in the Mandla district of Madhya Pradesh, India. This public-private partnership aimed to reduce morbidity and mortality utilizing case management and vector control strategies. A team of over 200 members was employed to achieve the aim of zero malaria cases in the 1200+ villages of Mandla district by 2021. They focused usage of insecticide-impregnated bed nets, indoor residual sprays, mass screening of symptomatic and asymptomatic patients, mobile-based surveillance systems, EIC tools, and supply chain for malaria drugs and diagnostics.
11. About 35 million Indians have asthma, and nearly 90% of them do not use inhalers fittingly. In 2021, Lupin started a digital asthma educator platform, '**Joint Airways Initiative**', by means of social media and radio channels. They collaborated with 50+ leading healthcare professionals to raise awareness among asthma patients on the importance of correct inhalation techniques. In 2021, they also launched an educational website, 'Sciflix', for budding pulmonologists. Sciflix is a mobile-adaptable



website that provides access to evidence-based content, such as the latest research and medical advancements, aids doctors in clinical decision-making, and improves patient outcomes.

12. Cipla founded the 'Palliative Care and Training Centre' in 1997 in Pune, where they care for patients with all severe illnesses. To date, it has provided free-of-cost care to over 20,000 patients. It aims to deliver the best care, infrastructure, and facilities, and provide the best quality of life. The wards are named after flowers, and the patients are also known by their names, not bed numbers. The 50-bedded Centre provides holistic care by addressing the patients' and their families' physical, social, psychological, and spiritual needs. To achieve this, they follow a multi-disciplinary approach with skilled professionals (Figure 1). Healthcare professionals use palliative medicine training and evidence-based interventional pain management techniques of WHO. Cipla has also empowered caregivers by training them with the necessary skills. Various volunteers engage the patients in creative activities like art, yoga, craft, rangoli making, music, and games. Moreover, festivals are celebrated with immense pomp and joy. The aim is to give a feeling of home.

Figure 1: Multi-Disciplinary Approach to deliver Holistic Care



Source: Cipla Palliative Care and Training Centre Brochure

Table 1 lists various pharmaceutical companies, the awareness programs run by them, the diseases they focus on, and their reach among Indians.

Table 1: Pharmaceutical Companies, their Awareness Programs, focused diseases and Reach

Serial No.	Pharmaceutical Company	Awareness Program	Focused Diseases	Reach
1.	Novartis	Arogya Parivar	Communicable and Non-communicable Diseases	More than 36 million Indians
2.	Abbott	Make India Thyroid Aware	Thyroid	More than 15 lakh Indians
3.	Roche	The Blue Tree	Cancer	Over 7000 low-income patients
4.	Novo Nordisk	Changing Diabetes Barometer	Diabetes	Over 7.6 lakh Indians
5.	Johnson & Johnson	Be the Change for TB	Tuberculosis	More than 35 million people across TV and radio
6.	Boehringer Ingelheim	State of Stroke	Brain Stroke	-
7.	Allergan	Keep Sight India	Glaucoma	8276 glaucoma patients and 749 glaucoma suspects
8.	AstraZeneca	Beyond Sugar	Diabetes	Over 1 crore Indians by 2030
9.	Dr. Reddy's Laboratories	SPARSH ASSISST	Cancer Hair Loss	6000+ cancer patients



		SAHYOG CHEER Save the Gen Next	Prostate Cancer Chronic kidney disease Tobacco	- - - -
10.	Sun Pharmaceuticals	Malaria Elimination Demonstration Project	Malaria	1200+ villages of Mandla district
11.	Lupin Limited	Joint Airways Initiative	Asthma	-
12.	Cipla	Palliative Care and Training Centre	All serious diseases	Over 20,000 patients

Source: Authors' observations, analysis, and collections from secondary sources and literature

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The accessibility to healthcare in India has substantially improved over the years. The credit goes to all healthcare organizations such as hospitals, clinics, pharmaceutical companies, testing laboratories, amongst others, healthcare workers such as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, paramedics, Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers, Anganwadi Workers (AWWs), and policies and plans of the Government of India. However, looking at the humungous population of 1.5 billion, more innovative measures and practices need to be adopted to revolutionize the Indian healthcare scenario. Let us take an example of the United States of America; Community Health Workers have been a part of the USA healthcare system for a long time; however, the Government of the USA started a novel initiative to aid patients, called the Polyvalent Community Health Worker (CHW) Program.

A polyvalent community health worker follows the multi-modal and multi-disciplinary approach to the provision of healthcare services. They are equipped with complete knowledge of diseases, from symptoms to treatment. They provide evidence-based and cost-effective interventions, disease prevention and management services, a better quality of care, and lower per capita costs. The CHWs pay regular patient visits, attend to their problems and doubts, and provide services related to their condition. They are well aware of the patient's home



environment, social structure, personal and professional relationships, and even financial capabilities. Therefore, the CHWs are cultural liaisons between the patient and healthcare providers. According to research by The Institute for Clinical and Economic Review (Whitely et al., 2013), regular CHW interventions produced cost savings as there was a decrease in urgent care visits. Moreover, patients onboarded under the CHW Program for six months to two years required limited or no interventions.

In India, community health workers like Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers, Anganwadi workers (AWWs), and Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs) are present. They are health activists responsible for creating awareness and disseminating information among the masses related to health, nutrition, living conditions, sanitation, hygiene, and family welfare, amongst others. They are the promoters of good health practices. They provide primary medical care for minor ailments, counsel pregnant women, and give referrals to Public Health Centres (PHCs) and Community Health Centres (CHCs). As per the selection rules of ASHA, only an Indian woman aged between 25-45 years, with minimum education up to VIIIth grade, is eligible to apply for the post. This is where reform is required. The Anganwadi workers and Auxiliary Nurse Midwives mainly focus on mother and child health and constantly train the ASHA workers. The ASHA workers mainly focus on women's health-related issues, such as antenatal care, reproductive hygiene, sexually transmitted diseases, post-natal care, contraception, safe delivery, breastfeeding, child hunger, and malnutrition. Indian men also face some personal issues that can be understood and solved by the same gender only. Therefore, community health services should not be limited to women only. A focus on the various communicable and non-communicable diseases is a need of the hour, as 60% of all deaths in India are due to non-communicable diseases (Nethan et al., 2017).

Moreover, the minimum qualification of these community health workers should be increased to at least matriculation (Class Xth), in addition to the training provided. In general, the ASHA worker-to-population ratio is 1:1000. Considering the population of India, this is an alarming issue. It is neither feasible for an ASHA worker to handle 1000 people nor is it healthy for their health and well-being. Therefore, urgent recruitment of community health workers must be done.

Due to the 1:834 doctor-patient ratio (Pragativadi News Service, 2022), a care gap exists in the caregiving process due to inadequate knowledge, guidance, training, and support of caregivers. Therefore, PSGs and PAGs are a need of the hour as they will aid in bridging the care gap and promote good quality healthcare management. They empower self-advocacy, advise lifestyle and coping mechanisms, identify symptoms, advise diagnostic tests, choose



proper therapies, manage finances, raise funds, assist in insurance, provide emotional and moral support, reduce feelings of isolation, and increase public awareness about the health condition. An American mechanical engineer founded an interactive social networking service, PatientsLikeMe, in 2004. It revolutionized patient-centric care as it gave patients a voice. Patients from various regions could share their personal stories about their health, symptoms, and treatments. These real-world experiences provided a conducive environment for peer support and learning. It also educates the patients about various disorder, their symptoms, prevention, and treatments. It is the world’s largest integrated community, with more than 8,30,000 people suffering from 2,900 conditions. In India, Boehringer Ingelheim launched their website for brain stroke awareness after they discovered that only 1 in 4 Indians are aware of the symptoms of brain stroke. However, more such initiatives from the citizens, government, and healthcare organizations will drive the Indian healthcare sector to its desired goal.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

OBJECTIVE	CONCLUSION
To identify the need for patient support groups and patient advocacy groups in India.	A care gap exists in the caregiving process due to inadequate knowledge, guidance, training, and support of caregivers. Therefore, PSGs and PAGs are a need of the hour as they empower self-advocacy, advise lifestyle and coping mechanisms, identify symptoms, advise diagnostic tests, choose proper therapies, manage finances, raise funds, assist in insurance, provide emotional and moral support, and reduce feelings of isolation.
To study the programs run by MNC and Indian pharmaceutical companies in improving the Indian healthcare scenario.	Some of the programs run by MNC and Indian pharmaceutical companies are listed in Table 1. For instance, Novartis’ Arogya Parivar, Abbott’s Make India Thyroid Aware, Roche’s The Blue Tree, Sun Pharmaceuticals’ Malaria Elimination Demonstration Project, Lupin Limited’s Joint Airways Initiative, amongst others.
To suggest measures and practices that will help revolutionize the Indian	The Government of India should recruit more community health workers. Community health services should not be limited to women only. The minimum qualification of



healthcare scenario by taking ideas and references from the healthcare system of other developed countries like the USA.	community health workers should be increased to at least matriculation, in addition to the training provided. It is imperative to focus on the various communicable and non-communicable diseases, as 60% of all deaths in India are due to non-communicable diseases.
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MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study gives a true picture of the programs run by some of the MNC and Indian pharmaceutical companies in India and how they have helped improve the Indian healthcare scenario by connecting doctors with patients and caregivers. Patient advocacy groups are important allies and collaborators for pharmaceutical companies. However, some pharmaceutical companies directly engage in patient-centric awareness. The pharmaceutical companies and patient advocacy groups see value in collaboration, as both gain from it. In recent years, the involvement of MNCs and Indian pharmaceutical companies has expanded to increase patients' awareness of their conditions and encourage them to talk to doctors. This study will guide emerging pharmaceutical companies who want to enter the patient-centric care segment. It will provide them with inclusive insight and ideas for execution by studying the programs of established pharmaceutical companies as a reference.

LIMITATIONS

1. As the study is secondary and case-based research, we were unable to find the reach of some of the programs run by pharmaceutical companies.
2. The secondary data collected for the study was not easily available on the web. Therefore, extensive and deep searching was required.
3. As compared to the MNC pharmaceutical companies, the data on the disease awareness programs of the Indian pharmaceutical companies was difficult to find as their corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities are very diverse.

SUGGESTIONS

The Indian pharmaceutical companies need to emulate their approach, in line with that of the MNC pharmaceutical companies, by using patient support groups and advocacy groups. Moreover, they need to give equal importance to doctors and patients by adopting doctor-centric and patient-centric approaches, respectively. This will update the doctors on the latest



research and medical advancements and help them in clinical decision-making, like choosing the appropriate diagnosis and medical interventions for the quick recovery of patients. The Indian pharmaceutical companies are guiding the doctors, who in turn advise the patients to adhere to medications, exercise, lifestyle, and dietary modification for the long-term sustainability of good health. The Indian pharmaceutical companies can introduce a 'patients' corner' on their website, where patients can register for free and provide feedback on medicines, disease states, symptoms, and adverse effects. Indian pharmaceutical companies can also guide the patients, patient groups, and caregivers in managing the tolerable side effects of the drug formulations to promote medical adherence for better cure and recovery. This will help in building confidence and a win-win situation between the two vertices of the triangle of key interacting stakeholders, that is, patients, doctors, and pharmaceutical companies, thus, promoting the concept of The Winner's Triangle.

CONCLUSIONS

Barring COVID-19, India is home to various deadly diseases like diabetes, diarrheal diseases, cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, and cancer. Considering the humungous population of India, the outbreak and spread of these diseases can be controlled only if healthcare workers join hands with PSGs, PAGs, CHWs, and pharmaceutical companies. This will empower the patients in unimaginable ways as they can understand the symptoms, identify the risk factors, manage the adverse effects, and learn the importance of medication adherence. This will help in building confidence and trust among the patients, doctors, and pharmaceutical companies, thereby promoting the concept of The Winner's Triangle. The traditional roles and recruitment of CHWs like AAWs, ANMS, and ASHA workers should be altered, and a polyvalent CHW program should be started. PAGs and PSGs should collaborate with pharmaceutical companies to raise awareness about various diseases. This strategic collaboration will increase the reach of every program and benefit the masses.



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