



ALL INDIA BSNL PENSIONERS' WELFARE ASSOCIATION (CHQ)

[Regd. No. T 1833/09]

Identified & Registered under 'Pensioners Portal'

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03-04-2024

To

The Addl. Secretary & Director General, Central Government Health Scheme, New Delhi.

Sub: Request for withdrawal of CGHS OM dated 28.03.2024 mandating linking of CGHS Beneficiary ID with Ayushman Bharat Health Account ID

Madam,

We have come across the O.M. issued by the CGHS Directorate vide F.No. Z15025/23/2023/DIR/CGHS(Comp.No.8236195)I/3663776/2024 dated 28th March, 2024 making linking of CGHS Beneficiary ID with Ayushman Bharat Health Account ID mandatory w.e.f. 1st April 2024 and asking the CGHS beneficiaries to complete the linking within 30 days.

A similar order had appeared in January 2023 followed by some sharp reaction to the same in social media. Then, in March 2023, through a Press Release by Press Information Bureau, the Government had denied having issued any such order categorically stating that, "This claim is fake. GOI has made no such announcement". Now it is proved beyond doubt that the above OM was not fake as it has been uploaded in the CGHS official website.

We are unable to believe that CGHS Directorate has issued such an O.M since the Government itself had earlier denied issuing such an announcement and also because the ABHA scheme itself unequivocally claims that it is purely voluntary. You will agree that a Government Scheme purely voluntary for an Indian Citizen cannot be made mandatory only for the CGHS beneficiaries.

The ABHA lists the benefits of obtaining ABHA number as i) Establish unique identity across different healthcare providers within the healthcare ecosystem; ii) Link all healthcare benefits ranging from public health programmes to insurance schemes to your unique ABHA number; iii) Avoid long lines for registration in healthcare facilities across the country; iv) Seamless sign up for Personal Health Records applications for health care sharing.

All these benefits will differ from individual to individual and most of the CGHS beneficiaries will not require such identity across different healthcare providers and insurers. Linking with ABHA will no way alter the long lines in our wellness centres. All the CGHS beneficiaries will not be willing to share their medical records which include consultations, investigation reports, prescriptions with other hospitals and insurers. Though sharing of medical records is said to be with their consent, it is not known if the consent will be case by case or a one-time consent. Also with CGHS functioning already computerized, connecting all wellness

centres and all the empanelled hospitals on-boarding in the computerized system, there is no need for this exercise.

For the above reasons and due to the concerns about the safety and security of our medical records remaining unaddressed, it looks strange that linking CGHS card with ABHA has been made mandatory all of a sudden and giving a small window for completing the work. Many of the beneficiaries being senior citizens cannot do the exercise on-line. The pensioners associations have not been taken into confidence before taking such a decision, while DoP&PW claims that pensioners associations are part of the pensioners' welfare programmes.

Of and on, the Government has been saying that Education and Health care are non-core activities, while reducing the budget allocations to them.

Now, the OM issued by your office compels CGHS beneficiaries to opt for government hospitals which are not satisfactory at most of the places. Even the CGHS wellness centres are not providing satisfactory service everywhere, as in the national capital where VIPs are the beneficiaries. Your Directorate should take necessary steps to improve the functioning of CGHS centres all over the country to ensure better healthcare to lakhs of employees and pensioners.

We would therefore request you to kindly cause withdrawal of the said O.M dated 28.03.2024 and continue to allow only willing CGHS beneficiaries to link their CGHS cards with ABHA, since picking out the CGHS beneficiaries to become mandatory ABHA account holders, which is otherwise a voluntary scheme, will be unjust and discriminatory.

With kind regards,



Yours sincerely,
(V Vara Prasad)
General Secretary.