

Union Health Ministry urges States/UTs to ensure that no restriction is imposed on movement of Medical Oxygen between States

States/UTs made responsible to ensure that every hospitalized COVID patient receives oxygen

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It has come to the knowledge of the Union Health Ministry that few States are trying to curb the free inter-State movement of oxygen supplies by exercising provisions under various Acts and also mandating the manufacturers/suppliers located in the State to restrict their oxygen supplies to only the hospitals of the State.

In view of this, the Health Ministry has reiterated the critical importance of Oxygen in hospitals for management of critical COVID patients. In a letter written to the States/UTs, Union Health Secretary has emphasised that availability of adequate and uninterrupted supply of medical oxygen is an important pre-requisite for managing moderate and severe cases of COVID-19.

The Health Secretary has urged the States/UTs to ensure that no restriction is imposed on the movement of medical oxygen between them. It has been strongly reinforced that it is every State's responsibility to ensure that every hospitalized COVID patient receives oxygen.

It has been again brought to their notice that medical oxygen constitutes an Essential Public Health Commodity and any impediment in the supplies of medical oxygen in the country may critically impact the management of patients suffering from COVID-19 disease in other parts of the country. Moreover, some of the major oxygen manufacturers/suppliers already have existing supply agreements with hospitals in various states with a legal obligation to fulfil such agreements.

The Centre-led COVID management strategy is based on Standard of Care Treatment Guidelines. These Guidelines have ensured a uniform and standardised quality of medical care in all the COVID facilities, including hospitals. For moderate and severe cases, adequate oxygen support, appropriate and timely administration of anti-coagulants and widely available and inexpensive corticosteroids, in accordance with the protocol, can be considered to be the mainstay of COVID-19 therapy.

Adequate supply of oxygen throughout the country has enabled effective clinical care of the hospitalised moderate and severe cases, in conjunction with other measures. The adopted host of strategies have actively resulted in rising Recovery Rate and steadily declining Case Fatality Rate (1.67% currently). As on date, less than 3.7% of active patients are on oxygen support.

MV/SJ

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