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Medical community rejects Obama's charges, says it has best doctors

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TAKING American protectionism to new heights, US President Barack Obama sought to garner support for his healthcare plan by branding Indian healthcare system as cheap. Obama, who previously targeted the Indian outsourcing industry during his election campaign, took the swipe at the Indian medical industry while urging Americans to prefer high-quality American healthcare over what is offered in India and Mexico.

While the Indian government expressed shock at Obama's statement, the medical community is equally dismayed.

Renowned cardiologist Dr Naresh Trehan, who also heads the Medanta Hospital in Gurgaon, felt that Obama's statement is political posturing. He said, "Obama made a political statement. He has been promising better and affordable healthcare facility to the people of America but has not been able to do so for a long time now." Dr Trehan believes that it is the



'Obama made a political statement. He's been promising better facilities'

frustration of not being able to do anything in healthcare for a long time which comes across through the statement made by Obama.

Dr Pranav Mishra, a doctor of the Indian origin in Alabama the US, said, "At present health insurance in America is very expensive, and people without a good job cannot afford to buy it." When asked about the reasons why Americans come to India for healthcare, he said, "The reason is purely economical. No country can match the skills and facilities of American hospitals. If I need medical care, I would



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prefer to have it in an American hospital."

Dr Pradeep Chowbey, the director of Max Institute of Minimal Access, who treats patients from outside India regularly, said, "The healthcare facilities in India are at par with the facilities available in developed countries. In fact, Indian doctors and surgeons are more experienced, efficient and caring for the patients and easily approachable."

A senior official from the Apollo Hospitals Group responded to Obama's statement, saying, "The medical-travel sector in India is poised

for greater growth. The Apollo Hospitals offer care of an outstanding standard and clinical quality, benchmarked with global standards, all at a fraction of the cost of hospitals in the United States and other Western nations. It has been this compelling combination of factors, which has attracted patients from over 55 countries to our hospitals."

Shobha Mishra, a director with the industry lobby group FICCI, dismissed the impact of any US policy change, "Even if the policy is implemented, I don't think it is going to have any visible impact in the immediate future. Most of our health tourism comes from either NRIs or Middle-eastern countries or African nationals. The NRIs will anyway prefer coming to India, as our healthcare facilities are at par with the world standards." She also felt that such patients prefer to be treated at a place which feels closer to home. "Most Middle East and African nationals prefer India as a healthcare destination due to cultural proximity," she added.

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