

Collusive agreement between doctors, drug firms: Survey

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RAIPUR: Surveys across three major cities in Chhattisgarh have revealed that doctors continue to be under the influence of pharmaceutical companies and service providers of diagnostic clinics and labs.

One in every three patients failed to obtain prescribed medicines from public hospitals where they were being treated and often ended-up buying costly medicines from private pharmacies.

This affirms the observation made by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) on consumption expenditure that

three-fourths of the total out-of-pocket health expenditure is spent on drugs.

According to Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) — the organisation that carried out the research study in Chhattisgarh — the supply of medicines in public hospitals is short and they have a tendency to force patients to buy drugs from private sources.

“This suggests the possibility of collusive arrangements between the hospital and chemists/pharmaceutical companies,” observed Vikash Batham of CUTS. CUTS supported by Sutra Consultancy, in association with Lalitha Foundation, conducted surveys in Raipur,

Bilaspur and Durg to raise awareness among consumers that they have a right to quality healthcare at affordable prices.

This study is being supported by Oxfam India. The findings undermine the intent of the Chhattisgarh State Integrated Health and Population Policy 2007 to promote health for all.

The survey highlighted the practice of paying commissions to doctors for referring patients to private diagnostic laboratories. Dr Kamlesh Jain of State Health Resource Centre said that such collusive behaviour existed and there was an urgent need for effective regulatory mechanism.