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Govt plans board on medical technology to benefit patients

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The Centre is planning to create an assessment board to identify the latest and best medical technology for government hospitals on the basis of an independent cost-benefit analysis.

In the absence of such guidelines, these decisions are often industry-driven, putting the hapless patient at the receiving end.

"We intend to set up the medical technology assessment board comprising 10-12 members.

The board will help the Union Health Ministry choose the most appropriate and most effective interventions," Soumya Swaminathan, director general of the Indian Council of Medical Research said here.

It would seek to replicate the experience of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation, set up in 2001, in other fields of healthcare. "People have misunderstanding on

immunisation issues. Before NTAGI, immunisation decisions were on expert-driven mode, which are open to questions. NTAGI brought transparency,” she said.

Since the government has limited health budget, the proposed board would help quantify the trade-offs for a specific drug or device so that the government can make an informed choice, said Rakesh Kumar, joint secretary in the health ministry.

Even though the plan to set up the board was conceived almost five years ago, the health ministry made the announcement about its formation at a time when a section of the medical technology industry is upset with the government for inclusion of the coronary stent in the national list of essential medicine for price control.

But, two government reports, published within the last eight months, made it aptly clear how the patients pay through their nose on the stent price as leading manufacturers sell their products at an inflated price.

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