

India Must Move from ‘Pharmacy of the World’ to ‘Laboratory of the World’; AI Must Complement, not Replace, Human Clinical Judgement : Union Minister Smt. Anupriya Patel

IIM-A Healthcare Summit 2026 deliberates on India’s AI-Driven Healthcare Vision for Viksit Bharat @2047

Speakers highlight AI power for Drug Discovery and Healthcare Delivery

India Pharma Archives and a Book on India’s COVID-19 Vaccine Journey Unveiled

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India should move beyond being the “**Pharmacy of the World**” and become “**Laboratory of the World**”, driven by research, innovation and emerging technologies, said Union Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare and Chemicals & Fertilizers **Smt. Anupriya Patel**.



Addressing the **third edition of the IIMA Healthcare Summit 2026** on the theme “**Advancing AI in Healthcare**” today at IIMA, Ahmedabad, the Minister highlighted India’s contribution during the COVID-19 pandemic. She said the Indian pharmaceutical industry ensured uninterrupted supplies of vaccines and essential medical products to more than 200 countries, while India’s vaccination programme administered over **2.2 billion doses**.



Speaking about the transformational power of AI, the Minister highlighted its potential to accelerate drug discovery, enable personalised treatments and strengthen healthcare delivery through improved screening, clinical decision-making and disease surveillance. The Minister stressed that AI adoption must be **safe, responsible and human-centred**, with strong safeguards for patient privacy and technology complementing, rather than replacing, human clinical judgement. She called for moving from pilots to population-level implementation through stronger collaboration among Government, academia, healthcare institutions, startups and industry. She also stated that Centres of Excellence for AI in healthcare have been established at AIIMS New Delhi, PGIMER Chandigarh and AIIMS Rishikesh.



The Minister said the Government's **₹5,000 crore Promotion of Research and Innovation in Pharma-MedTech Sector (PRIP) Scheme**, aims at strengthening research and industry-academia collaboration and supports transition towards innovation-led growth. The Minister also highlighted the **₹10,000 crore Biopharma SHAKTI mission**, announced in the Union Budget, to strengthen capabilities in biologics and biosimilars, develop skilled manpower, strengthen regulatory and clinical trial capabilities to support the domestic biopharmaceutical ecosystem.

Shri Manoj Joshi, Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals, highlighted the growing adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors. He said that while large pharmaceutical companies are increasingly using AI for production, human resource, marketing,

distribution and inventory management, startups, particularly in Bengaluru and Hyderabad, are **leveraging AI for drug discovery, enabling faster identification and shortlisting of potential drug candidates** and significantly reducing the time required for drug discovery.

He highlighted challenges related to access to capital, software licensing, computing capacity and specialised talent and said the Government is working to address these through initiatives including the **National Biopharma Mission and IndiaAI Mission**. Shri Joshi also informed that the Government is working towards providing substantial **support for eligible startups** towards software licensing and operational costs to strengthen AI-led innovation in pharmaceuticals.

Shri Joshi underlined the importance of making healthcare and genetic data accessible to Indian innovators with appropriate safeguards and stressed upon the potential of AI in clinical trials, precision medicine and digitisation of patient-level healthcare data.

Smt. Punya Salila Srivastava, Secretary, Department of Health & Family Welfare, highlighted the Government's efforts to build a robust digital health ecosystem and promote responsible, evidence-based use of AI. She said **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)** is creating an interoperable, open-standards-based digital health ecosystem, with over **96 crore ABHA IDs** and more than **1,000 crore health records** digitally linked across healthcare facilities and professionals.

She spoke about the AI-enabled applications for early detection of diseases such as tuberculosis and diabetic retinopathy, as well as AI-enabled clinical decision support through **eSanjeevani**, which has benefited more than **20 crore patients**. She emphasised privacy, responsible AI, evidence-based innovation and collaboration among Government, academia, startups and industry, while highlighting the **IndiaAI Mission and AIKosh** for democratising access to datasets, AI models and toolkits.

Shri Pankaj Patel, Chairman, IIMA Board of Governors and Chairman, Zydus Lifesciences spoke about the transformative potential of AI across the healthcare value chain, from drug discovery to patient care. He noted that AI can accelerate the identification of potential drug candidates, support clinical trial design and patient recruitment and help researchers identify failures earlier.



During the event, **India Pharma Archives** <https://indiapharmaarchives.com>, a digital initiative by the **Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA)** in collaboration with IIM Ahmedabad Archives, to document and preserve the evolution of India's pharmaceutical industry was unveiled. Built as a living archive, it brings together oral histories, archival documents, photographs and rare media, capturing the people, institutions and milestones that have shaped the sector over the past century. A book on **India's COVID-19 vaccine development** capturing an important chapter in the country's scientific, pharmaceutical and institutional response to the global health crisis was also released.

IIMA Healthcare Summit 2026 was organised by the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA) bringing together policymakers, stakeholders from the healthcare industry and academia to deliberate on the theme “Advancing AI in Healthcare”, aligned with the Government of India’s IndiaAI Mission and the vision of a healthy and developed India by 2047.

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