

Addapedia Editorial Analysis 07 June 2024

Health regulations need a base to top approach

A devastating fire in a private neonatal care nursing home in New Delhi in late May led to loss of lives and intense media scrutiny.

What are the challenges with healthcare regulations in India?

- There are multiple regulations across different states, making it complex for providers to comply.
- Overly complex regulations burden healthcare providers, especially smaller facilities.
 - Some States have over 50 approvals under multiple regulations, which need to be followed and complied with by every health-care facility.
- Unrealistic quality standards are difficult to implement.
 - Indian Public Health Standards, or IPHS, were first released in 2007 and have been revised twice since then. Yet, in 17 years of existence, only 15% to 18% of government primary health-care facilities in India meet the government's own standards.
- Regulations unfairly target private facilities compared to government-run ones.
- Slow approval processes hinder operations.
- The regulations around digital healthcare and data protection are not well-defined.
- The current system might **prioritize penalties** over measures that encourage improvement in safety and quality standards. This creates a fear environment that creates challenges for doctors to render their services in seamless manner.

What are some suggestions for improving healthcare regulations?

- Simplify regulations and make them achievable.
- Involve stakeholders (healthcare professionals, communities) in crafting regulations.
- Implement a tiered system with different standards for various facility sizes.
- Subsidize smaller facilities to improve safety and quality.
- Promote primary care providers for cost-effective care

Can you answer the following question?

Discuss the challenges in implementing effective healthcare regulations and suggest a framework for making them more efficient and accountable.

White Phosphorus

A global human rights group has claimed that Israel used white phosphorus incendiary shells on homes in at least five towns and villages in conflict-affected southern Lebanon.

- Israel claims it uses white phosphorus only as a smokescreen, not to target civilians.

What is White Phosphorus?

- White phosphorus is a form of the chemical element phosphorus.
- It's a waxy solid, typically appearing white, yellow, or translucent.
- White phosphorus is a pyrophoric that ignites when exposed to oxygen, producing thick, light smoke as well as intense **815-degree Celsius heat**.
 - Pyrophoric substances are those which ignite spontaneously or very quickly (under five minutes) when in contact with air.
- White phosphorus emits a distinct garlic-like or match-stick like odour.

What are its applications?

- **Military:** White phosphorus is used in various military applications due to its flammability, including:
 - **Incendiary weapons:** It can cause burns and fires upon contact.
 - **Smoke grenades:** It produces a thick white smoke for cover or signaling.
 - **Tracer ammunition:** It creates a glowing trail to track bullet trajectory.
- **Industry:** It has some industrial applications such as:
 - Manufacturing matches and fireworks (historically)
 - Production of phosphoric acid and other chemicals

What are the harmful effects of white phosphorus?

- Upon exposure, white phosphorus can cause severe burns, often down to the bone. The burns are excruciatingly painful, difficult to heal, and susceptible to infections.
- Particles of white phosphorus that remain lodged the body can reignite if in contact with air.
- Inhaling white phosphorus particles or smoke can cause respiratory damage and harm to internal organs.
- Those who survive initial injuries often experience a lifetime of suffering — with impaired mobility and painful, horrific scars.
- White phosphorus can also devastate infrastructure and property, damage crops and kill livestock, with raging fires, especially in windy conditions.

What is the Legal status of white phosphorus munitions?

- White phosphorus munitions are not under a blanket ban, though their use is regulated under the International Humanitarian Laws.
- **Not considered a chemical weapon**
 - It is not considered a chemical weapon because its operational utility is primarily due to heat and smoke, rather than toxicity. Thus, its use is governed by the **Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW), specifically Protocol III**, which deals with incendiary weapons.
 - Incendiary weapons are weapons that use fire and heat to set fire to objects or cause burn or respiratory injury to people

- Palestine and Lebanon have joined Protocol III, while Israel has not ratified the protocol.
- **Protocol III of CCW regulates the use of incendiary weapons**
 - Protocol III prohibits the use of airdropped incendiary weapons in concentrations of civilians. However, it has two significant loopholes.
 - First, it **restricts some** but not all use of ground-launched incendiary weapons where there are concentrations of civilians.
 - Second, the protocol's definition of incendiary weapons covers weapons that are primarily designed to set fire to and burn people.
 - **It excludes multipurpose munitions** such as those containing white phosphorus, which are considered to primarily be “smoking” agents.



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