

## MOTION

Madam Speaker

I move that

“This Parliament approves the formation of a bipartisan Committee to conduct an inquiry into the public health and medical system and for the Report of such an inquiry to be tabled, debated and adopted by Parliament and to form the basis of formulation of policies and strategies by Government to improve the delivery of health care and medical services”.

Madam Speaker, the sad but unmistakable reality is that there is serious deterioration of our health services and medical care.

Our extremely poor health service is blight on our nation. There is no other way to put it. Go to any hospital in the country and you will see the pathetic conditions.

I have visited a number of hospitals and health centres since the resumption of parliamentary democracy. I visited them before the elections as well. My latest visits have shown no improvement in service delivery. Patients especially women and children are waiting for more than 5 hours to see a doctor. The physical condition of many hospitals is shameful.

Our hospitals should never run out of essential medicines or basic equipment such as syringes for blood tests. I need not go into examples because there is an endless list of grievances that we receive daily.

May be the Honourable Prime Minister should visit the hospitals without notice to see for himself the conditions of the hospitals around the country. He should start in his own backyard with CWM hospital!

Even the expectation of clean and hygienic conditions at our hospitals is just too high an expectation from this Government. Just recently we had go to CWM and we saw for ourselves the reality.

Madam Speaker, In the A & E or Accident and Emergency Unit, there is lack of beds – the lack of beds and linen in Wards is another matter. Patients are told to get off their beds and sit on chairs with oxygen masks on while new cases are transferred onto the beds.

In one of the Wards here is a single shower and washroom. It was full of mosquitoes with patients using vape mats. Yesterday the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services told Parliament that only two types of mosquitoes spread Dengue. How people are expected to identify which mosquito is of what type? May be the Minister can teach us a thing or two about identifying the two dangerous types of mosquitoes!

The biggest hypocrisy was that while posters carrying the Ministry's message called "Fight the Bite" were displayed on the walls, patients and visitors to the Ward were trying their best not to be bitten by mosquitoes.

Madam Speaker, the Paying Ward is another story. Taps and showers were not running in one room, despite it being a paying ward - more than \$100 a night for a room.

The examples that I have given are totally unacceptable.

Madam Speaker, despite major reforms health care has not improved. This is the painful reality.

Whilst Fiji has the largest population of the Small Island States in the Pacific, its health budget spending is unfortunately under 5% Health to GDP ratio, under the World Health Organisation recommendations. This figure is also less than our neighbours Tonga, Samoa, even Solomon Islands health budget allocations.

Although Fiji is most developed as far as Manpower numbers, Technology and a Centralize Pharmaceutical supply line, originally intended for the neighbouring States also, we continue to fail in areas of research, policy and practice.

Despite the partial successes of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG), we are falling behind with planning and commissioning the Sustainable Development Strategy (SDG) to 2030.

The health system is now in utter chaos with little control of the spiraling standards. The health and medical services is subservient to the Ministry of Civil Service for Recruitment and addressing Staff issues.

The political leaders in health have left Health Administration to run day to day affairs at their whim, National programs remain unmonitored and running grants will fizzle out if monitoring and evaluation of funding grants are not collated as part of their international partnerships.

Madam Speaker, Infrastructural Development programs have been stalled and held back.

The development of a radiotherapy facility has gone off the radar. The International Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC) promised a turnkey handover if a Cabinet / Parliamentary endorsement to all the preparatory studies was endorsed by 2020. One wonders whether the Health Ministry presented a Cabinet paper to facilitate this critically important development.

The Cardiology Services is facing major self-imposed challenges by the Ministry of Health and Medical services. The services of The Indian Group "Sahyadri" was terminated controversially on completion of 5 years of the Memorandum Of Agreement. No crossover in the interim was considered. No Ongoing or Residual analysis was undertaken to forecast the deadly impact this would have on the health and wellbeing of common Fijians.

We are told that instead WHO was instructed to mount a study of the angiogram, catheter laboratory services and the open heart component in this gap.

Madam Speaker, we need to know whether the report has been completed and if yes why no action is forthcoming.

Instead at a much greater cost patients are forced to seek treatment at private hospitals when this could have been done at a much cheaper price at CWM, Lautoka and possible Labasa hospitals.

Madam Speaker, the Kidney Dialysis services are a no show despite all the pomp in the last budget. Very much like the shambolic free Medicine scheme or the supposedly free electricity policy which has driven away consumers who had initially signed for it in droves.

The Opposition's Motions during the last two national budgets calling for a significant increase to the paltry sum of \$300,000 for dialysis was defeated.

Yet Government sees it fit to allocate annually, \$9 million for golf, \$18 million as Singapore route marketing grant to Fiji Airways and \$11.3 million to Fiji Broadcasting Corporation. One may well ask – are these more precious than the lives of those ordinary citizens in desperate need of dialysis?

It is also legitimate to ask how many doctors have been recruited by the Ministry following the passage of the Medical and Dental Practitioners Amendment Act about 11 months ago. We recall it was announced that 170 doctors were needed and would be recruited but it seems that this recruitment drive has been a colossal failure.

And now Madam Speaker, the Honourable Attorney General talks about privatising health care and medical services at Lautoka and Ba hospital under public-private partnership. It confirms government's inability to provide decent and affordable health care.

This government paid little attention to our major hospitals and medical facilities. It did not lack resources but did not make improving medical and health care a priority.

That is why we need a bipartisan approach for an inquiry into all aspects of health care and medical services. Madam Speaker, only a bipartisan inquiry will succeed and the bipartisan committee can look at and develop recommendations for a decent and affordable public care system.

There are many things that we can do.

There is a need to introduce a comprehensive health care modernization program. Any health care modernization program must place our citizens at the heart of rebuilding health care.

We have to ensure medical care that is focused on compassion, respect and dignity life for all our citizens. Regardless of age and place of residence, citizens must have access to decent health care.

To achieve this, a Personalized Health Care framework may be needed. There is a need to ensure clinical (Hospital Based Care) is delegated to Empowered Health Specialists Group (Teams) for standard practice, equal care levels throughout Fiji.

Madam Speaker , funding will have to be committed to ensure that Fiji has well-placed and well-funded team of medical workers. Our citizens should know that in hospitals, they will be seen by doctors within a specified time and not wait endlessly.

Madam Speaker , Public provision of health care in Fiji is a foundation on which this country is built. We need to invest in order to enhance and sustain delivery of care especially in specialized areas such as cancer treatment, renal transplant and cardiology.

We need our medical professionals to be able to work with the most modern equipment and technical support. Fiji needs joined-up private-public sector solutions to modernize medical facilities and equipment, to use new technologies, including telemedicine, to extend services to island communities, and reduce costs of private and public sector drugs through bulk purchasing.

Madam Speaker , we have ensure that facilities are restored and maintained to International Health Quality Standards. We should not put up with the idea that because we are poor and small country, our standards can be lower.

There is a need to realign/review policy for equitable health services outcomes in environmental, ecological health in sustaining life and welfare; disaster and humanitarian crisis health response.

Madam Speaker , Health should be a big priority. Health is fundamental human right. Investing in health is investing in our future. At the moment there is no foresight when it comes to health and medicine. We should cure this illness.

And together, in a bipartisan manner, we can collectively look at what needs to be done. And then the future will be much brighter.

I commend the Motion.