

## EDITORIAL

# Reimagining Healthcare Equity: Advocating for Inclusion of Septorhinoplasty under Ayushman Bharat PMJAY

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Septo-rhinoplasty, commonly known as nose reshaping surgery, has long been associated with cosmetic enhancements in urban centers. However, it's crucial to recognize the transformative impact Septo-rhinoplasty can have in rural India, extending beyond aesthetics to address significant health and social aspects. In rural areas, where access to specialized medical care is limited, individuals often bear the physical and psychological burdens of nasal deformities without recourse. Congenital anomalies, trauma, and functional impairments due to a misshapen nose can adversely affect a person's quality of life. Septo-rhinoplasty emerges as a beacon of hope, offering not just cosmetic improvements but substantial functional benefits.

Beyond the medical realm, the societal implications of Septo-rhinoplasty in rural India cannot be overstated. Sociocultural dynamics often tie physical appearance to social acceptance and opportunities. A transformed nose can alleviate the stigmas associated with facial abnormalities, empowering individuals to integrate more seamlessly into their communities and pursue livelihoods without the shackles of prejudice.

However, the challenge lies in making Septo-rhinoplasty accessible to rural populations. Initiatives aimed at increasing awareness about the procedure, coupled with efforts to provide affordable and accessible healthcare facilities, are imperative. Collaborations between departments facilitate outreach programs, ensuring that the benefits of Septo-rhinoplasty reach those in need.

Currently, septorhinoplasty treatment is not covered under Ayushman Bharat PMJAY. Leveraging social security schemes like Ayushman Bharat PMJAY to facilitate free septorhinoplasty treatments is not merely an economic consideration but a commitment to equitable healthcare. By aligning with these initiatives, medical colleges can extend their reach to underserved populations, ensuring that individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds have equal access to specialized treatments that can enhance their quality of life.

Ayushman Bharat PMJAY, launched in September 2018, stands as a groundbreaking initiative in the landscape of Indian healthcare. This ambitious and transformative program, often referred to as the Pradhan Mantri Jan

Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), seeks to provide financial protection to vulnerable and economically disadvantaged families by ensuring their access to quality healthcare services. Envisioned as the world's largest government-sponsored health insurance program, Ayushman Bharat PMJAY aims to address the dual challenges of escalating healthcare costs and inadequate access to medical facilities.

At its core, Ayushman Bharat PMJAY represents a commitment to universal healthcare and social inclusion. It endeavors to cover over 100 million families, or approximately 500 million individuals, making healthcare services more accessible and affordable for those who need it most. The program operates on the principles of equity, efficiency, and quality, striving to bridge the healthcare divide and ensure that no citizen is left behind due to financial constraints when seeking medical care.

This transformative initiative reflects the government's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 3—ensuring good health and well-being for all. By providing a robust safety net for healthcare expenditures, Ayushman Bharat PMJAY not only addresses immediate healthcare needs but also contributes to poverty alleviation and socio-economic development.

While the Ayushman Bharat PMJAY scheme aims to provide financial protection for a wide range of medical treatments, there are certain reasons that may be considered for not including septorhinoplasty under the scheme:

- 1. Perceived Cosmetic Nature:** Septorhinoplasty is often associated with cosmetic enhancements, and there may be concerns about allocating resources for procedures that are primarily considered aesthetic rather than essential for health and well-being.
- 2. Subjectivity in Need:** Determining the medical necessity of septorhinoplasty can be subjective, as some cases may involve functional impairments affecting breathing, while others may be purely cosmetic. The inclusion of septorhinoplasty could raise challenges in defining eligibility criteria.

- 3. Potential for Overutilization:** Including septorhinoplasty might raise concerns about overutilization, where individuals seek the procedure for cosmetic reasons rather than medical necessity, potentially straining healthcare resources.

It is essential to note that these reasons are speculative and based on potential considerations that policymakers might take into account. The inclusion or exclusion of specific procedures under Ayushman Bharat PMJAY is ultimately subject to policy decisions and ongoing evaluations of the program's objectives and impact.

Septorhinoplasty, often pigeonholed as a cosmetic procedure, deserves a reevaluation within the scientific community. Beyond cosmetic enhancements, this surgical intervention plays a vital role in addressing functional impairments and improving overall respiratory function. We advocate for a holistic approach to septorhinoplasty, recognizing its multifaceted benefits like:

- 1. Improved Breathing Function:** Septorhinoplasty can address structural issues such as a deviated septum, nasal valve collapse, or other obstructions, leading to enhanced airflow and improved breathing.
- 2. Correction of Nasal Trauma:** Individuals with a history of nasal trauma, such as fractures or injuries, can benefit from Septo-rhinoplasty to correct deformities and restore normal function.
- 3. Reduced Snoring and Sleep Apnea:** Septorhinoplasty may alleviate snoring and contribute to the management of sleep apnea by addressing nasal issues that can obstruct the airway during sleep.
- 4. Sinus Health Improvement:** Reshaping the nasal structures during Septo-rhinoplasty can contribute to better sinus drainage, reducing the frequency and severity of sinus infections.
- 5. Enhanced Sense of Smell:** Correction of nasal issues during Septo-rhinoplasty can positively impact the sense of smell, especially in cases where structural abnormalities affect olfactory function.
- 6. Correction of Congenital Defects:** Septorhinoplasty can address congenital nasal abnormalities, improving both function

and appearance for individuals born with structural issues.

7. **Facilitation of Facial Harmony:** Septo-rhinoplasty can contribute to overall facial harmony, ensuring that facial features are in proportion, which can positively impact self-esteem and psychological well-being.
8. **Enhanced Exercise Tolerance:** Improved nasal airflow can lead to increased exercise tolerance, as individuals can breathe more efficiently during physical activities.
9. **Alleviation of Chronic Headaches:** In cases where nasal issues contribute to chronic headaches, Septo-rhinoplasty may help alleviate these symptoms by addressing the underlying causes.
10. **Correction of Chronic Rhinitis:** Chronic rhinitis, characterized by persistent nasal inflammation, may be addressed through Septo-rhinoplasty, offering relief from symptoms like congestion and runny nose.

It's time to broaden our perspective on Septo-rhinoplasty and recognize its profound impact

**Figure 1: Sri Madhusudan Sai Institute of Medical Sciences & Research, Muddenahalli, Bengaluru, Karnataka India**



In this context, between 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> October 2023, under leadership of renowned surgeons, Dr K B Bali and Dr Amar Singh, a free Septo-rhinoplasty Surgical hands-on Workshop was held at Sri Madhusudan Sai Institute of Medical Sciences & Research, Muddenahalli, a completely free of cost rural private medical college in southern India, aimed at addressing

on the lives of individuals in rural India. By bridging the gap between cosmetic enhancements and essential healthcare, we can contribute to not only the physical well-being of rural populations but also the social fabric that binds communities together. Septo-rhinoplasty, when viewed through this lens, becomes a catalyst for positive change, breaking barriers and fostering inclusivity in the diverse tapestry of rural India.

The complexity of nasal deformities necessitates a seamless collaboration between various medical disciplines within a medical college. Establishing a prompt referral system between departments, such as otolaryngology, pediatrics, general medicine, pulmonology and plastic surgery, ensures a comprehensive evaluation of patients with nasal deformities. This interdisciplinary approach optimizes patient care, addressing both the functional and aesthetic aspects of health.

the pressing need for both treatment and training in the field of Septo-rhinoplasty. The workshop, held at SMSIMSR, Muddenahalli brought together aspiring medical professionals and experienced surgeons to contribute to the enhancement of healthcare services in rural areas.

**Figure 2: Surgical team with the patients who underwent Septorhinoplasty**



Community outreach plays a crucial role in identifying patients with deformed nasal structure, addressing both subclinical and clinical issues that may go unnoticed by the individuals themselves. Beyond aesthetic concerns, nasal deformities can lead to respiratory problems, affecting one's overall health. Many individuals may be unaware of the impact of their nasal structure on their well-being, making proactive identification essential. Subclinical issues, such as mild breathing difficulties, may escape the notice of individuals until they escalate into more severe health issues. Community outreach health staff, combined with other awareness and screening programs, can educate communities about the potential health implications of nasal deformities. By conducting regular screenings, these health professionals can identify cases early on, facilitating timely intervention and preventing the progression of subclinical issues. Community health staff can serve as a bridge, connecting individuals with appropriate medical resources and ensuring they receive necessary care. This proactive approach not only improves the quality of life for affected individuals but also reduces the burden on healthcare systems by addressing issues before they become more complicated. In essence, community outreach health staff play a pivotal role in enhancing overall community health by identifying and

addressing nasal deformities, ensuring a healthier future for all.

#### **CONCLUSION**

It's important to note that the clinical benefits of Septo-rhinoplasty extend beyond cosmetic concerns, and the decision to undergo the procedure should be based on a combination of medical, social and personal considerations. Consultation with a qualified healthcare professional is essential to determine the appropriateness of Septo-rhinoplasty for individual cases. The community screening programs should pay attention to identifying and addressing nasal deformities as well, ensuring a healthier future for all. Medical colleges can strive to serve the needy by offering free of cost services by using social security schemes like Ayushman Bharat PMJAY if septorhinoplasty is included under Ayushman Bharat PMJAY. As we delve into the intricacies of Ayushman Bharat PMJAY, it is crucial to appreciate its role in reshaping the healthcare landscape in India, fostering inclusivity, and striving towards a healthier and more equitable society.

#### **DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS**

The authors haven't used any generative AI/ AI assisted technologies in the writing process.