

# Docs can be effective lobbyists for healthcare policies: Soubry

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**Chennai:** British doctors hang their coats briefly to raise their voice and UK health minister Anna Soubry loves it. Medical professionals should be the biggest lobbyists for driving effective healthcare policies, she said.

A few months ago, doctors in the UK wrote to their prime minister against indiscriminate closure of accident and emergency units. In December, they convinced the government that increasing alcohol price would bring down health problems and now they are demanding that the government decriminalise drug abuse.

"We as politicians think we should make policies and allot funds. But when it comes to health, it's doctors who provide the most valuable point of view," she said. A few months ago, she wasn't very convinced about having a minimum unit price for alcohol.

"I thought it would affect moderate drinkers. I didn't want them to pay more. But when a group of doctors came into my office and told me about the number of patients they see with liver failure every day and how drinking even in moderation wasn't safe, I

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**Anna Soubry**  
UK HEALTH MINISTER

had to agree," she said.

She said she would not tell the Indian government about the policies it would have to adopt but said it could learn from the mistakes the National Health Services made, the challenges faced and successes achieved.

Welcoming healthcare professionals to come to the UK for training, she said her country was keen on sending nurses to India, particularly Kerala. "Our nurses are extremely efficient but suddenly we are beginning to feel they somehow don't hold hands or wipe brows any more. This is what nurses from Kerala are extremely good at. We want to know if it's a part of training or if they are naturally inclined," she said.

## 'Raise profile of diabetes to create awareness'

**Chennai:** Doctors should work to raise the profile of diabetes to help create awareness and get funds for prevention, management and research of the disease, UK health minister Anna Soubry has said.

She was speaking at the inauguration of the Indo-British diabetes summit on Friday amid doctors, healthcare professionals and government officials. "Diabetes is a serious problem but we aren't doing everything we must. We don't spend enough money on the disease. If you use such meetings to raise the profile of the disease, we will overcome several hurdles," she said.

Earlier, principal health secretary Keshav Desiraju said the government had increased funds for healthcare in the 12<sup>th</sup> five year recognizing the increasing incidence of lifestyle-related diseases, including diabetes. **tnw**