FSSAI IN NEWS

FSSAI to check quality of food in hospitals, healthcare facilities

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New Delhi: India’s food safety regulator has turned its sights towards hospitals and other healthcare facilities to ensure they serve safe and nutritious food.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), which already has oversight of food consumed in households, offices and even places of worship, wants public health institutions to follow safety standards prescribed by the regulator.

FSSAI chief executive officer (CEO) Pawan Kumar Agarwal. FSSAI will organize for all state health ministers a round-table meeting that will be chaired by union health minister J.P. Nadda.

In the first step, the FSSAI will organize a round-table meeting of health ministers from the states. The event will be chaired by Union health and family welfare minister Jagat Prakash Nadda, said FSSAI chief executive officer (CEO) Pawan Kumar Agarwal.

“Next month, we are holding this round table,” Agarwal said, adding that research by regulator has identified food served in hospitals as “potentially hazardous.”

According to FSSAI, people visiting hospitals are more susceptible to food-borne illnesses than the general population. Food contamination by pathogens could be particularly harmful. In fact, small numbers of enteric pathogens that may be innocuous to most healthy people can cause disease and even death in susceptible patients, especially immune-compromised subjects, the food regulator recently said in a note.

India has 35,416 government hospitals with around 1.37 million beds, according to directorate general of state health services data. Of these, 26,604 government hospitals are located in rural areas. Each of these hospitals has a canteen that serves food to patients.

Agarwal said food handlers at hospitals should be trained on food hygiene and hazard analysis and critical control points to ensure food safety.
As part of its agenda of ensuring safe and nutritious food at hospitals, the food regulator has already partnered with industry bodies such as the Indian Medical Association, Indian Dietetics Association, Nutrition Society of India, Indian Pharmaceutical Association, Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences, National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers, the National Health Mission, and some government health organisations.

This is not the first time FSSAI is trying to ensure food safety and nutrition in a public system. In February, FSSAI said it had teamed up with the ministry of women and child development and drafted a plan to make supply of fortified food mandatory in government-supported schemes such as mid-day meals, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), and the Public Distribution System (PDS), in an attempt to fight malnutrition, Mint reported on 2 February.