

CHAPTER X : MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE

All India Institute of Medical Sciences

10.1 Irregular payment of conveyance allowance

All India Institute of Medical Sciences paid conveyance allowance to ineligible staff despite clear orders to the contrary from the Ministry. The irregular payment amounted to Rs. 68.59 lakh during 2002-03 and 2003-04 alone.

The Government of India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, had sanctioned conveyance allowance in November 1987 with retrospective effect from July 1987 at different rates to Specialists/General Duty Medical Officers of the Central Health Service (CHS) working under Central Government Health Scheme and non-CHS Medical officers/Specialists working in Hospitals. The allowance was payable for making on an average, a minimum number of 20 domiciliary visits during a month or equal number of visits to the hospital outside working hours and subject to fulfillment of certain prescribed conditions including provision that expenditure incurred on domiciliary/hospital visits was not to be less than the amount claimed as conveyance allowance. These orders were further extended in March 1990 by Government of India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to non-medical (Group 'A') Specialists/Scientists retrospectively from 1 April 1989. Accordingly, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (Institute) identified 14 categories of Group 'A' Scientists/Specialists in June 1992 and granted conveyance allowance to these officers with retrospective effect from 1 April 1989.

On the basis of representation made by its Officers' Association, the Institute proposed to the Ministry in April 1993 grant of conveyance allowance to all its Group 'A' & 'B' officers. The Ministry rejected the proposal in July 1993 and observed that the conditions prescribed for grant of conveyance allowance should be strictly observed. Despite Ministry's rejection of the proposal, the Institute in January 1999 granted conveyance allowance, with retrospective effect from 1 April 1989 to the remaining Group 'A' officers. These included officers holding the posts of Registrar, Educationist, Chief Librarian, Asstt. Controller of Examination, Publication & Public Relation Officer, Financial Adviser, Finance & Chief Accounts Officer etc. These officers were *prima facie* not required to pay visits to hospital after office hours, a basic condition for grant of conveyance allowance. In September 2002, the Institute further

extended the benefit of conveyance allowance to all its Group 'B' officers although they were not eligible under the orders of the Government of India. The payment of conveyance allowance made to 549 ineligible Group 'A' and Group 'B' officers during 2002-03 and 2003-04 alone amounted to Rs. 68.59 lakh.

After the issue was raised in audit, the Institute referred the matter (July 2003) to the Ministry for ex-post facto sanction to grant of conveyance allowance. The Ministry categorically directed (June 2004) the Institute to discontinue the payment of conveyance allowance to ineligible officers and recover the irregular payment made earlier.

The Institute stated (October 2004) that the payment of conveyance allowance to Group 'A' and 'B' officers and other technical officers had since been discontinued. The reply is silent on whether the overpaid amount for the earlier years had been recovered from the ineligible personnel as directed by the Ministry.

The matter was referred to the Ministry in August 2004; its reply was awaited as of February 2005.

10.2 Irregular grant of financial assistance

All India Institute of Medical Sciences made irregular payment of financial assistance of Rs. 42.97 lakh to its staff members.

The guidelines framed by the Governing Body of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (Institute) for providing financial support to its members of faculty for attending various scientific conferences, workshops and congress abroad provided that the grant of financial assistance was subject to the condition that the members of the faculty should have served the Institute for at least three years and had at least three years or more of service left before superannuation. The financial assistance, which was inclusive of airfare, registration fee and daily allowance, was to be provided once in two years and was also to be limited to actual expenditure incurred or lump sum payment ranging from Rs. 0.10 lakh to Rs. 1.00 lakh, depending upon the country to be visited, whichever was less.

Audit scrutiny of the records relating to financial assistance released during 2002-03 and 2003-04 revealed the following irregularities:

- a) Rs. 25.60 lakh was paid as financial assistance to 26 non-faculty members.

- b) Rs. 16.27 lakh was paid to 19 faculty members who were either due to retire within three years or who had served the Institute for less than three years. In one case, Rs. 0.50 lakh was paid in excess of the prescribed ceiling.
- c) Rs. 1.10 lakh was paid to two faculty members who had already availed of the financial assistance during the previous year.

The Institute stated (February 2004) that all proposals received from faculty members and other non-academic staff were placed before the Financial Grant Committee of the Institute, which was headed by the Director of the Institute and that the said committee had approved all these proposals. The reply is not tenable as the guidelines framed by the Governing Body of the Institute and amended from time to time specifically debarred employees falling under the above categories from the grant of financial assistance. The committee's decision cannot over-ride the guidelines framed by the Institute.

Thus, non-adherence to the guidelines framed by the Institute resulted in irregular payment of Rs. 42.97 lakh to ineligible staff members. This amount has not been recovered.

The matter was referred to the Ministry in August 2004; its reply was awaited as of February 2005.

10.3 Deficient procurement planning resulting in idling of equipment

Equipment costing Rs. 14.30 lakh was procured without ensuring availability of space for its installation resulting in its idling in storage for over four years.

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) placed an order on a foreign firm (July 1999) for purchase of 'inverted microscope with closed circuit television system and motorized micromanipulator system' costing Rs. 14.30 lakh. The equipment, which was received in the Institute in October 1999, was handed over to the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in November 2000 i.e. after a lapse of one year. Audit scrutiny revealed (November 2003) that the machine had not been installed as of November 2003 even after the lapse of over four years.

The Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology stated (November 2003) that the equipment could not be installed for lack of space. It added (July 2004) that equipment was likely to be installed by September 2004 on completion of

renovation work in the Department. Although in February 2003 the Director (AIIMS) had decided that responsibility needed to be fixed in this case and disciplinary action taken, yet AIIMS did not furnish the details of the action taken, if any, to audit.

Thus, purchase of equipment without ensuring availability of basic infrastructure for its installation indicated deficient planning, which resulted in idling of investment of Rs. 14.30 lakh. The patients were also deprived of the benefit of improved treatment with the help of this equipment, apart from the risk of damage to the equipment during its storage for over four years.

The matter was referred to the Ministry in June 2004; its reply was awaited as of February 2005.