The estimated proportion of deaths due to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in India has increased from 37.09% in 1990 to 61.8% in 2016, said Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu as he spoke at length about the threat posed by NCDs such as diabetes, hypertension and cancer on Sunday.

He was addressing the inaugural session of the three-day Global Health Care Summit 2018, organised by American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) here. He quoted the figures from ICMR India State-Level Disease Burden Study report 'India: Health of the Nation's States'.

"What is more worrisome is that a large proportion of those suffering from such diseases are young. A national movement against the growing incidence of NCDs needs to be launched. There is a need to establish NCD clinics in urban and rural areas and the private sector must play a prominent role in this regard," the Vice-President said.

Urging doctors to adopt medical social responsibility, he appealed to them to make youngsters aware of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and food habits.

Mr. Naidu also listed shortcomings in the health sector — low doctor-patient ratio, high share of out-of-pocket expenditure, inadequate infrastructure in rural areas, lack of penetration of health insurance and inadequate preventive mechanism.

"There is also a great urban-rural divide when it comes to healthcare infrastructure. Nearly 86% of all medical visits in India are by people living in rural areas with majority required to travel long distances for accessing quality health care facility. Besides, the out of pocket expenses are driving many into the vicious cycle of debts. To mitigate this crisis, we need to pay much more attention to primary healthcare," he suggested.