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**28 March 2019, Thursday ✦ 4.00pm – 5.30pm**

(Registration starts at 3.30pm)

NUS Law (Bukit Timah Campus), Eu Tong Sen Building Level 1, Lee Sheridan Conference Room

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## **Riding the Wheel of Charity: Unwaged Women in Healthcare**

**Speaker: Associate Professor Dipika Jain**

**Associate Dean and the Founding Executive Director of the Centre for Health Law, Ethics and Technology (C.H.L.E.T.) at Jindal Global Law School (JGLS)**

**Chairperson: Associate Professor Lynette Chua, NUS Law**

### **ABSTRACT**

As of 2016, no country had achieved wage equality for equal work performed by men and women. Studies show that gendered wage differences exacerbate other inequalities, as they restrict the accumulation of wealth and increase the likelihood of women living in poverty. In particular, the fields of healthcare and medicine are extremely gender biased and perpetuate numerous stereotypes and prejudices. For example, surgery is typically considered a 'masculine' profession that women are unwilling or unable to join. Similarly, women are expected to take on the burden of more 'feminine' services such as aiding with pregnancy and delivery, or providing information about family planning. Data gathered from country-level studies suggests that gender discrimination is systemic, and that discrimination documented in other employment sectors are just as prevalent in healthcare. In India, the ongoing issues around the plight of ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers highlight the institutional nature of this gender discrimination. ASHAs were introduced as a central component of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) to counsel women on safe institutional deliveries, postnatal care, breast-feeding, and good health practices such as nutrition, immunization, contraception, child hygiene etc. However, there is no dearth of news media coverage of the plight of overworked, underpaid and mistreated ASHA workers across the country.

We, at CHLET, conducted a qualitative empirical study in three districts of Haryana, namely Karnal, Rohtak and Sonipat, to (a) confirm the high attrition rate amongst ASHA workers; and (b) identify key social, economic and structural challenges faced by them in primary healthcare delivery. The aim of this study is to contextualize these challenges within a gender-and-health framework and argue that in order to mold a strong healthcare system that empowers women and children, policy reform ought to focus on building stronger agents of health delivery. Having contextualized these challenges and findings within a gender-and-health framework, we argue that the NRHM institutionalizes gender-based discrimination by (1) reinforcing stereotypes of women in the medical and healthcare profession as soft skill service providers; and (2) legitimizing a system of unequal pay through performance-based payment practices.

### **ABOUT THE SPEAKER**



Dipika Jain is currently an Associate Professor, Associate Dean and the Executive Director of the Centre for Health Law, Ethics and Technology (C.H.L.E.T.) at Jindal Global Law School (JGLS), India. She received a Masters of Law (LL.M) from Harvard Law School in 2009. Dipika teaches and writes in the area of Critical Legal Theory, Gender and Sexuality, Postcolonial Feminism, Family Law, Public Health Law, Transgender Rights, Minor Jurisprudence, Constitution and Social Movements, Reproductive Justice and Socio Economic Rights.

Dipika's research is at the intersection of Law and Marginalization. Her research was recently cited by the Supreme Court in the landmark decision of *Navtej Johar vs. Union of India*, 2018 (decriminalization of homosexuality). In 2018, she was designated as the first Research Associate Professor at JGLS. Her recent work appears in *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender*; *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law and Justice*; *Statute Law Review*, *American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy and the Law*; *Houston Journal of International Law* and prestigious Indian journals including *Seminar* and *Economics Political Weekly*, among many other journals. She is currently working on the second co-edited volume titled, *Desire and its Discontents: Queer Politics in Neoliberal India* to be published by Zubaan and Chicago University Press in Fall, 2019.

As a founding faculty at JGLS, Dipika has played an instrumental role in setting up the Law School, which includes being the Head of its Academic Affairs Office. Before joining the academia, she had worked on precedent setting public interest litigations in the Supreme Court of India including *Sampurna Bahrua vs. Union of India* (petitioning for the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000 in fifteen States in the country. The Act was amended as a result of this petition.), *the Right to Food and Access to Antiretroviral Drugs Case*.

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### **REGISTRATION**

There is no registration fee for this seminar, but seats are limited.  
Light refreshment will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis.  
To register, go to <https://goo.gl/mSxme9> or scan the QR code  
Closing Date: **Wednesday, 27 March 2019**  
For enquiries, please contact Mr. Chris Chan at [rescle@nus.edu.sg](mailto:rescle@nus.edu.sg)

