

🚩 Latest High Court Judgment (January 24–25, 2026)

- The **Kerala High Court** dismissed petitions by medical professional bodies (such as the Indian Medical Association and Indian Association of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation) that sought to *prevent* physiotherapists and occupational therapists from using the prefix “**Dr.**” before their names.
- **Justice V. G. Arun** stated that the title “**doctor**” is *not exclusively for medical (MBBS) professionals* — historically it has been used for anyone with a high level of academic qualification, including those with PhDs.
- The court observed that the **National Medical Commission (NMC) Act** does *not* contain a provision that limits the use of “**Dr.**” only to MBBS-qualified medical doctors.
- The court rejected the argument that the **Kerala State Medical Practitioners Act** gives exclusive statutory rights to use the title.
- It also declined to read down the **National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions (NCAHP) Act, 2021** to restrict physiotherapists’ scope or professional titles.

🚩 What This Means

✓ Qualified physiotherapists and occupational therapists **can use the prefix “Dr.”** — the court considered “doctor” an academic/learned title, not legally tied only to medical practitioners.

⚠️ However, the court’s remarks are based on interpretation of existing statutes (like NMC Act and NCAHP Act), and *do not create a new statutory right where none existed*. They emphasize academic tradition as well as the absence of legal restriction.

🚩 Background & Earlier Orders

Before this final judgment, there was an **interim order in late 2025** where the High Court had directed authorities to stop physiotherapists and occupational therapists without recognised medical qualifications from using the “**Dr.**” prefix, noting a conflict with the **Indian Medical Degrees Act, 1916**.

That interim order underscored legal concerns about public confusion and qualification standards—but was ultimately superseded by the later judgment in 2026.

🚩 Legal Context

- **Indian Medical Degrees Act, 1916** — governs use of medical degrees/titles for recognised medical doctors.
- **NMC Act (National Medical Commission Act)** — regulates medical practitioners but does not confer exclusive rights to the “**Dr.**” title.
- **NCAHP Act, 2021** — regulates allied health professionals (including Physiotherapists), and was part of the issue before the High Court.