

Original Article

Health Status of Indian Women

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Abstract

Women account for nearly half of the world population. They are the primary care given to us. Women are the backbone of the families, communities and economies. Thus, the health status of women directly replicates the health of the nation. Therefore, the health status of women is important for the Nation's development.

Women's health in India faces significant challenges from gender inequality, poor nutrition especially anemia, high maternal mortality, domestic violence, and limited access to care imparting reproductive, maternal and overall wellbeing etc.

Though Government initiative and awareness are improving the maternal mortality rate, the mindset of society, especially males needs to be changed and they must be educated to promote health for women. The good health of women is not just a personal but national priority.

Keywords: Women's Health, Maternal Health, Nutrition and Malnutrition, Reproductive Health. Public Health in India, Gender Inequality, Healthcare Access, Anemia among Women, Health Awareness, Women Empowerment

Introduction:

Health is an important factor that contributes to human well being and economic growth. Though food, shelter and cloth are our fundamental needs but now health is also recognised as a fundamental human need. A crucial factor that affects both economic development and human well being is good health.

Women account for nearly half of the world population. They are the primary care givers. The health of a country's female population has profound implications for the health and education of children and the economic well being of households as well as for the women themselves. Women's health is more than a concern; it is a catalyst for societal transformation and a beacon of empowerment. Women are the backbone of families, communities and economies. When women thrive societies flourish. Thus the health of women is very important for Nations development. Because the health status of women directly replicate the health status of the nation.

Currently women in India face a multitude of health problems which ultimately affect the aggregate economies budget. These factors are social, biological, cultural, psychological e.g. gender inequality, poor nutrition and diet, maternal mortality, domestic violence, anxiety and depression etc. Poor health status affects millions of girls and women in India. They still remain unreached as far as accessibility and affordability of healthcare.

Therefore the present study was undertaken to reveal the various factors affecting the women's health and community and government initiatives for improving the health status of women.

Factors affecting the women's health:

Following are the various factors that affect women's health.

Gender inequality: gender remains a key determinant of women's health and well being. Gender inequality is directly linked to Poor health status of women. Gender discrimination begins before birth. In India the most frequently aborted cases are girls.

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Since families prefer sons, pregnant mothers may become stressed. At birth girls tend to eat less than boys specially when there are more girls in the family. NFHS5 reveals a concerning trend girls in India receive less medical attention compared to boys.

Education: in India women are less educated than men. Girls should do household work and education is the secondary for them while education is important for boys. The village people think that girls are cursed and they do not want to spend money on girls' education as they are going to their husband's house after marriage so they are trying to get them married as soon as possible.

Maternal morbidity and mortality : India has a higher maternal mortality rate compared to other developed countries. Globally it is reported that about 830 women out of every 1 lakh women die everyday going to pregnancy related complications. It is also reported that about 400000 maternal deaths happen every year globally and out of these 100000 deaths happen in India. Indeed, lack of appropriate care during pregnancy and childbirth are especially the inadequacy of services for directing and managing complications that explains most of the maternal deaths . A study by Lanset Global Health found that only 52% of pregnant women in India received four or more antenatal checkups highlighting the need for improved excess and quality of care.

Malnutrition and Anemia: women always need better treatment and care. Malnutrition in women during growing age and pregnancy can lead to Less growth and anemia ensuring the cycle never ends because without food women cannot give birth to healthy children . Wide spread of anaemia and undernourishment leading to inter generation cycle of poor health.

Anemia is a significant health problem among women throughout the world especially in developing countries like India. As of the most recent National family health survey conducted in India in 2015-16, 56% of Indian women are anemic and 59% of pregnant women are anemic ,the highest rate in the world.

Anaemia is attributed to dietary inadequacy due to low purchasing power, illiteracy , ignorance regarding the nutritional value of available cheap foods, cultural taboos, superstition, large families etc. In a society where women's status is weak women face both covert and overt discrimination within their family . Women in India follow the custom of eating last or eating only the food left over after the dinner of male family members . Besides, educating awareness is an exact result of poor nutrition education.

Early marriage : in India child marriage are most common especially in rural area. As girls Mary at an early age becomes pregnant at a time when their body is not ready to bear the burden of a child which leads to gynecological problems that will worsen over time and maybe fatal.

Lack of self care: most Indian women do not take care of their own health .In addition Indian women often have unsuspected diseases, lack of knowledge about nutrition and its necessity for health and lack of knowledge about health maintenance is an additional limitation in their access to adequate care. . Women are more likely to suffer from certain diseases that can be diagnosed through physical examination, however their attitude towards this diagnosis is not very good. The last lack of self care leads to health problems among women.

Various ways to improve women's health:

Indian women's health can be improved by government initiative and also buy society or community.

Government initiatives :

- Health and wellness centers: India has about 76 000 centres which perform screening of five types of health issues hypertension, diabetes, breast cancer, oral cancer and cervical cancer .
- Rashtriya kishor swasthya karyakram: in this program female adolescents are sensitized about their health.
- Janani Suraksha Yojana : is a safe motherhood intervention under the NHM . It was launched in 12 April 2005 and is being implemented in all states with special focus on low performing States. It is certainly sponsored schemes and integrates cash assistance with delivery and post delivery care.
- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana: it is a scheme for pregnant women and lactating mothers. It is a direct benefit transfer scheme under which cash benefits are provided to pregnant women in their bank account directly to meet enhancer nutritional needs and partially compensate for wage loss.
- Surakshit Matrutva Aashwasan (SUMAN)2019: insures freeDignified quality Health Care with zero tolerance for service denial. Aims to endPreventableAnd maternalAnd newborn deaths.
- Laqshya (2017): improves quality of care in labour rooms and Maternity operation theatres. Insurance respectful and quality care during pregnancy and Postpartum.

Community initiatives:

- in order to ensure good health of women the same should be tackled at multi sectoral level such as eradication of child marriages, access to

contraceptives and Healthcare facilities at all events.

- maternal Health Care is no doubt important but health care for women across her life span is where the focus should be the most.
- promoting better health ,regular screening and preventive care are the areas that require attention .
- women access health facilities if it is available near their homes as they can barely take out time for themselves due to their multiple roles.
- the mantra to ensure that women access Health Care facilities is to have reliable and good health care facilities near women.
- empowerment shall come from within facilitated by the family members. Women must also priorities their health and be aware of the facilities that are being provided to them by the government.
- for pregnant women regular checkups are mandatory and through these visits their anemia should be taken care of and ensure childbirth under safe circumstances.
- The mind set of males in society needs to be changed and they must also be educated.
- Education is very critical to promote good health for women and eventually for all.

By considering these initiatives , the health of Indian women can definitely improve .

Conclusion:

A healthy society cannot be created if the health needs of women are neglected as they are the Bedrock of a healthy society. Ensuring good health of women is not just a personal but National priority.

Gender inequality, education , maternal morbidity and mortality, malnutrition and anemia, age of marriage and lack of self care are some important factors that influence the health of Indian women. Every woman must have access to information regarding the whole range of problems affecting women's health including these affecting not only the reproductive system but also the rest of the body. Their knowledge may encourage Healthy lifestyle choices which are the best means of preventing diseases extending life and improving overall well-being.

The government should take necessary and compulsory policies to improve the literacy rate and quality education as well as to provide adequate employment opportunities for women which might explore positive impact on the women's health concerns. The government can also improve the health status of women by strengthening and expanding essential Health Services as well as by frequent counselling on awareness of educational and nutritional needs.

Women who receive enough nourishment will be more able to contribute to society and secure future generations of healthy people.

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Conflicts of interest

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