

Chapter 52

Health Information Systems and Their Usefulness Among the Women Folk of Kanyakumari District, India

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes how health is the most precious component for the happiness and all-round development of human being in the society. Alongside this, information is an important resource for individual growth and survival. Therefore, a Health Information System (HIS) is a system for collecting/processing of data from various sources, and using the information for policy-making and management of health services. This chapter discusses health literacy and its association with health information needs and health information literacy, the status of women in India and their influence in the well-being of the family, and the impact of HIS. This chapter also proves that with enough data obtained from the women of Kanyakumari District in India, the government's policy needs to be directed towards women for the success of its health-care programmes.

INTRODUCTION

Health is a relative state in which one is able to function well physically, morally, socially, and spiritually in-order-to express the full range of one's unique potentialities within the environment in which one is living. In the words of Dubos (2007), "...health is primarily a measure of each person's ability to do and becomes what he wants to become..."

According to Buddha, of all the gains, the gains of health are the highest and the best. Health is not only essential for leading a happy life for an individual but it is also necessary for all productive activities in the society. Thus the concept of health is actively discussed in various period from the early stage of the society due to its social relevance and importance.

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Since independence, India has built up a vast health infrastructure and health personnel at primary, secondary and tertiary care in public, voluntary, and private sectors. For producing skilled human resources, a number of medical and paramedical institutions including Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH) institutions have been set up.

HEALTH

The word 'health' is derived from the old English word 'hoelth', which means a state of being sound and was generally used to infer a soundness of the body (Dolfman, 1973). Health as a state of being can range from very good to very poor. Perhaps health can be more exactly described as an index, or a measurement of function rather than of status.

The term 'health' is viewed differently by different people and authorities all over the world. India's First Five Year Plan (1951-1956) stated health as a "positive state of well being in which harmonious development of mental and physical capacities of the individual lead to the enjoyment of a rich and full life".

HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Health is the most precious component for the happiness and all round development of human being in the society. An individual's health and the health of a society are considered complementary to each other. It is a fact that the individual's health contributes to higher productivity and economic development, which in turn provides them with higher wages and better prospects for good health. Thus, societal development largely depends on the health of its community. It has been rightly pointed out in the report on the Census of India, 1971 that the expenditure on improving the health of a nation is regarded as good investment yielding indirect return in increased efficiency and productivity. Health is a major instrument of social and economic development and it can play a very important role in the creation of a new world. The level of development achieved by a society is often determined on the basis of the level of health and the system of health care and health services prevalent in the society.

The Universal Declaration of human Rights, states "Everyone has the right to a standard of living, adequate for the well-being of himself or herself and his or her family" (Sedamkar, 2011).

HEALTH INFORMATION

Information is an important resource for individual growth and survival. The progress of modern societies as well as individuals depends a great deal upon the provision of the right kind of information, in the right form and at the right time. Information is needed to take a right decision and also to reduce uncertainty.

The term 'health information' has been defined in different ways. In many countries, the term is interpreted to mean health statistical, epidemiological and other health oriented data used in the planning and management of health services by the decision-makers and administrators. It has been interpreted to mean health science literature covering health information at various levels. Some authorities safely consider health information just as a health literature.

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