

Public health practices and perception in the spotlight

Dear Readers,

Medicine and public health are closely interlinked. While new discoveries are made in the field of medicine every day, their implementation for the wellbeing of the masses represents a challenge. Several factors, social and economic, affect the direction and implementation of medical innovations. The present issue of IJMEDPH features a diverse array of articles covering the perception and implementation of the practice of medicine in the population.

Kulkarni *et al.* investigate the degree of coverage and factors influencing the decision to immunize children in an urban slum area of Mumbai, India. While heartening to know that overall coverage by immunization was about 88%, it provides interesting insight into the reasons why parents fail to get their children immunized. Minor illnesses, lack of awareness about immunization schedules, and economic difficulties emerged as reasons for failure to immunize the child- all of them can be remedied by better health education and follow up. Ghosh *et al.* reporting health-seeking behavior among mothers in a rural community in Darjeeling district of West Bengal, India echo similar conclusion- awareness through exposure to mass media, socio-economic status, and literacy were key factors that influenced a decision to seek healthcare for their children. Chawda *et al.* present a similar study, but in female construction workers, wherein, they report that nearly 67% children were underweight and 49% had stunted growth. Kulkarni *et al.* report that among adult agricultural workers, there was a greater trend to seek healthcare resources offered by government hospitals (48% vs. 28% seeking private medical care). In a country of 1 billion people, this represents a lion's share of the healthcare responsibility. However, as Thayyil *et al.* point out in their review article, about 78% of doctors practice in urban areas while over 80% of the total population resides in villages. The reasons behind these are no doubt complex, but steps like creation of a new course aimed at creating practitioners who will serve the rural populace represents a step in the right direction.

Nutrition, both under and over, particularly during childhood, has emerged as a key predictor of adult health. In their study, Agarwal *et al.* present the results of a cross-sectional observational study involving 20,802 children between 12-35 months of age, in whom Vitamin A supplementation was examined. Their results which are quite sobering suggest that only about 25% of children in India receive adequate Vitamin A supplementation. Regional differences, socio-economic status, educations of mothers, and parity were some of the factors that determined whether a child received adequate Vitamin A supplementation. Singh, in a review article, tackles the other side of nutrition- childhood obesity. Going beyond the numbers (which by themselves are quite staggering), these two articles in my view are a reflection of evolving health problems. Multiple factors including a growing economic divide are contributing to malnutrition. At the same time, it represents a great opportunity to fill the gaps in the healthcare system.

Perception of an idea, whether by medical students preferentially choosing one mode of learning over the other, or commercial truck drivers choosing to use barrier protection against HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases- is extremely important area of research vital to health promotion and maintenance. The articles by Sambo *et al.*, Sinha *et al.*, and Pathak *et al.* examine the perception of different groups of individuals in unique settings, all of which revolve around healthcare.

There is a lot of emphasis nowadays on “picking and choosing” selecting the most essential areas of research in the light of the evolving economic situation worldwide. Bed to bench research is being encouraged. However, it's as important to invest in health promotion and improving healthcare access as it is to promote new treatment strategies. I believe the present issue radiates this message through its ensemble of research and review articles. I hope readers will find these articles useful to their practice. We are enthused by the high quality in-depth studies and encourage scientists and physicians to continue sharing their work through us with the scientific community. We also welcome feedback from our readers on how to improve the quality of the articles further.

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