

Inclusions of Social Determinants for Public Health Care Approach: Does it Really Matter?

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Abstract

The National health policy accepted by the honorable Indian parliament in 1983 states health care as the main device for achieving sustainable development of the community. It is a known factor that development of any society depends on the healthy people only. Without good health even we cannot think appropriately and act properly and expect the society to keep moving smoothly. It is a known fact that without proper health we cannot expect the proper social inclusion of any community in any way. An in-depth study of social determinants on health culture of any society will help in understanding complete knowledge of etiology, various health issues and policy drawbacks etc of any society. Understanding social determinants on health would be more useful in planning geographic and cultural specific health care programmes for the rural people in the country. Holistic knowledge of social determinates will be helpful in understanding health seeking behavior of the people and this will provide valuable insight in framing ground level public health policies in the country. With this background this paper is to reveal various social determinants affecting on health. This paper concluded various social determinates of public health care needs to be focused urgently

Keywords: Determinants, Health, Inclusion, Public, Social

1. Introduction

Leslie, writes *“All systems of medical belief of practice are empirically self confirming. People everywhere live until they finally die and they only die once, while in the process of living they undergo various, physical and mental health illness, episodes. In brief, a lot of people will recover from their health problems no matter what the healers they met, say or do, and they will mostly would like to give credit to their recovery to what was done”* (Leslie, 1986 : 79).

Health is not only a stable state of physical and natural well being but also in a true sense it involved the various other complex issues. As it is widely known fact that, health is one of the imperative indicators shimmering the excellence of human life since time immemorial. Healthy community is very vital because it can set the destiny of the any society or country. Also healthy human resources lead to have any type of development or any kind of achievement. Health is a very vital integrated component of an

individual/a community. Sometime collapse of health may even lead an individual towards an early death. Also unhealthy community may be a hinder for the holistic growth and development of any society¹. Poor health status of any community may isolate that community from the mainstream of the society.

What is Health?

Scientific definition of the term ‘HEALTH’

WHO definition of health: The present definition of health was originally created during framing a preamble to the aims and objectives of the world health organization in 1946. According to the WHO definition “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. In 1986, the WHO said that health is “a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources as well as physical capacities”¹⁶.

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Today every government is intended to bring many health programmes. Quality health care has become a key indicator of social inclusion. Providing health care to the disadvantaged sections of the society has become a challenged task before any government, rather than just medical care, health is a very important constituent in every social development programmes. Generally quality health system depends on existing strong politico-economy of the state. Today health sector is a potential long term investment marketing potential¹. Excellence in the delivery of health care service mainly predisposed by the various socio-economic and other situational issues. We found that poverty, illiteracy, housing are some of the factors causing health inequalities in India. Uneven allocation of modern medical facilities, lack of effective prevention measure, development behavior of certain communities, absence of strong political will, bureaucratic negligence, poor medical infrastructure, malnutrition, transport system, people ignorance are some of the hurdles in the way of “Health for all”.

There are some studies to show that changing socio-economic process will also influence on the pattern of the health culture and health seeking behavior. This is very common and true in case of rural folk. It is found that when changes occur in the given health culture the health behavior will also get changes slowly. Thereby health status of that particular community will get changes. Hence perception and attitude of the community towards different health problems will get new shape and frame finally it leads to the formation of new health behavior when they faces such health disorders in the future². When the health culture is strongly influenced by the external organics

(level of education, migration, role of media etc.) in a particular geographical area people will develop new health behavior. This adopted a new health seeking behavior will resolves the health problems within the given ecological settings. This type of compulsory modification in the health behavior of a particular community for a moment will be overt and some time will be implied also³.

As we are aware socioeconomic and cultural issues have long been considering influencing factors on individual’s health (Table 1). These factors includes an individual-level (e.g. individual socioeconomic status, sex, caste, class) and neighborhood-level dimensions (culture, community, demography composition, social and physical environment) operating both separately and through various interactions⁵. Current spatial research has found that in rural communities, economics, caste and class status are furthestmost fundamental factors influencing on their health status. On the other hand, rural communities also face supplementary problems connected with access to, and utilization of quality health care⁴.

Public Health Agency of Canada has given 12 Social and Economic Determinates of Health¹⁸

- (1) “Income and Social Status
- (2) Social Support Networks
- (3) Education
- (4) Employment
- (5) Social Environments
- (6) Physical Environments
- (7) Personal Hygiene and Coping Skills
- (8) Proper Child Development
- (9) Biology and Genetic

Table 1. Breaking down determinants of health care seeking behavior⁶

Category	Determinants	Details	Sphere
Cultural	Status of Women	Elements of Patriarchy	Cultural property
Social	Age and Sex		
Socio-Economic	Households Resources	Education Level; Maternal occupation; Marital Status; Economic Status	Informal
Economic	Cost of care	Treatment, Travel, Time	Physical
	Type and severity of illness		
Geographical	Distance and physical access		Infrastructure
Organizational	Perceived quality	Standard of drugs, Standard of Equipment, competence of staff, Attitudes of Staff Interpersonal process	Technical, Staffing Interpersonal formal

- (10) Health Services
- (11) Gender
- (12) Culture”¹⁸

The World Health Organization¹⁷ views that the following health determinants has a pivotal role in determining the better health and standard of living of the people in general. The major health determinants are as follows;

1. Income
2. Education
3. Social Network^{16,17}

2. Social Determinates of Health

“what really moves the health of whole societies, adding to or subtracting from the sum of total health, may be factors which account for only a very small part of the individual variation in health and so escape detection” (Wilkinson:1996;16)

A not only biological factor, health is also determined by both social and cultural environment. Various studies have established this link. Some of the social variables like income or poverty, occupation, educational status social network etc.... plays a vital role in determining the health behavior of a community. Throughout the life course social determinants influences health at multiple levels. For example, income of a person influences the health at different levels. This influence may co-occur and interact with each other to produce health status. Further, various social –cultural factors independently influences the health of an individual at different stages of the life. As we are aware socioeconomic and cultural issues have long been considering influencing factors on individual’s health. These factors includes an individual-level (e.g. individual socioeconomic status, sex, caste, class) and neighborhood-level dimensions (culture, community, demography composition, social and physical environment) operating both separately and through various interactions⁵. Current spatial research has found that in rural communities, economics, caste and class status are furthermost fundamental factors influencing on their health status. On the other hand, rural communities also face supplementary problems connected with access to, and utilization of quality health care. It is found that throughout the illness period social determinates will play a role in choosing specific health care system (Aurvdeic, western etc). It helps in choosing affordable treatment⁶.

India can be divided into urban, tribal and the rural, social determinant issues also plays vital role on various social sections of the society like SC/ST/OBC. Rural people are most valuable to difference kinds of diseases.

Their social economic conditions normally will be poor some time they have to live in a most remote area. Their income, educational level and occupation type will be also plays a vital role while determining the health cultural (Figure 1).

3. Breaking Down Determinants of Health Care Seeking Behavior

3.1 Income

It is found that the income of any family may decide the echelon of the poverty in that family. However the connection between income and the health is not up till cleared it is not so easy to make known the relationship between health and income. A little bit income may be highly recurring. Or in some case we may need to focus on individual income or total household income. As we know Income also stands on various independent factors like employment status, salary, pension, household size etc... it is revealed that squat income at all times acquaintances with little accessibility for high-quality health care. The relationship among low income, mortality and morbidity tempo in a meticulous family proves poor health status itself. In addition it is established that person of having good health will have more possibility to get better income for himself. It has been established in quite a few studies. In the similar way owing to unhealthy, an individual may misplace occupation and decreases in the usual income⁷. Owing to the drop of the normal income not only influence on the individual including other household members⁸. It clearly know factor that good income enables one person to purchase a variety of health related

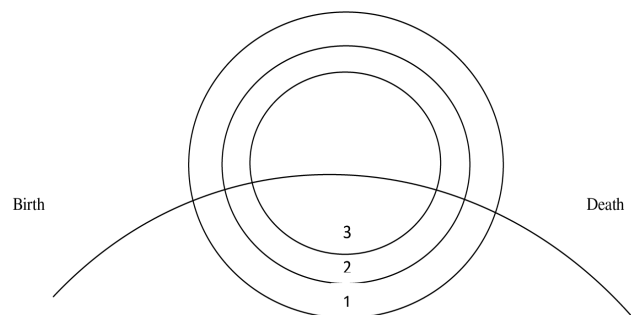


Figure 1. Bullseye Model of social determinants of health⁴.

1. Broader socio-culture environment
2. Civil society
3. Intimate sources and economic realm

items like, nutritious food, health insurance etc. In addition to it gives rather good mental health also. Good income too escalates than individuals from poverty connected pressure. Since income is a type of flow of resource, while other shape of wealth can be extremely helpful to maintain the good health at any stage of the life. Some studies have shown that people with high income live longer when contrast to the people of having little income. Infant mortality tempo would low in the high income people whereas it would be higher in the squat income group as we seen. Also “higher income people more likely to report having seen a physician regularly where as lower income group people are not”. All these result shows that marginal income or low income levels tends to be more powerfully connected with condensed prospect of poor health than augment the possibility of brawny health status. Reports have proved that elites of the population are spending lofty on health care. In addition poor people do not have a propensity to over consume health care relatively to their level of social status. Experts opined “however not all research shows an independent effect of income dissimilarity on health social problems since there is a less concord about whether income inequality causes health and social problems independent of these factors or not”⁸.

3.2 Education and Health

Educational level has a close association with health over the period of time. Various research works have shown that echelon of education unswervingly or circuitously impact on health issue. It is found that low level of education leads towards in dangerous health behavior. Education is an informal variable in improving the health status. Experts have established that advanced level of education is coupled with healthy lifestyle. It is found that linkage between level of schooling and health shows two issues;

- a. Causal role of education on health.
- b. Interface between the level of educational attainment and inherited features.

It is recently found that level of schooling is an indicator of improved health literacy. Educationists opined significance of giving pre-school education will, really augment the health scenario of the children and of the concerning family members. It is revealed that physical and as well as mental health of the educated people will be normally good and they will spend a smaller amount on

health problems than others. Recent study found that low level of education is greatly connected with the poor psychological status of an individual. Certain studies shows that low level of education is associated with poor biological conditions bad habits and unscientific health practices also. Interestingly a better educated people though they had bad habits previously but they gave them up more readily because of feature health care⁹.

Since education is also a major determinate in the health care low educated people have experience, a shortened life expectancy than higher educated. Also a high rate of crimes and violence can be seen among a low educated people. More education obviously leads to have a higher income. This higher income access to have high quality health care. It also is found that good education provides individuals to make better health related decisions himself /there self related to the other family members. In rural area level of education may not impact on health separately from other variable factors. Income and occupation also have good linkage with education as influential factors on health. Finally education is a vital for increasing the healthy life style of an individual. Due to better education, family members can practice good health behavior and low health expenditure¹⁰.

3.3 Poverty

It is widely known fact that poverty is a key role in determining health status of any community. It may be urban, rural or tribal. It is found that poverty ultimately results in unhygienic housing, poor nutrition, increased risk of infections etc. Poverty as on ultimate impact on any community particularly vulnerable and poor health status might be a best parameter to measure poverty. Experts felt increasing states health expenditure not only improves the health status of the community unless reducing poverty level we cannot expect any improvement in the health status of the population.

Poverty is a multidimensional aspects it affects on good food, shelter, un employment and low income that all work together and affects on individual health due to this an individual will be in risk of getting depression, anxiety any type of chronic disperse. Due to poverty poor people may not visit a doctor unless it is a serious disease. First he/she will try with local traditional or self medication. Sometime due to poverty patients will buy medicine over the counter (From the medical shops with prescription). Recent Human Development Report (2005) opines that poverty and health each influence each other directly

and indirectly. Sociologists felt poor people often describe illness and disease as fate, hunger, pain, fear, anger etc... poverty not only affects the adults it also affects severely on the health status of the children and aged people of the family. Due to poverty poor people visits only government hospitals where there will be no modern equipments and highly specialized physicians to diagnose the problem in the early stage¹¹.

Due to poverty only people cannot visit private practitioners or hospitals where one can get high quality of health care. Educationists felt due to poverty sometime children could not attend schooling; hence, children and parents cannot get any awareness about simple day to day health related practices. Poverty not only affects on physical health but also affects on the mental health. Poverty related stress may even provoke to commit any crimes in the society. This poverty related stress also lards to severe depression, lack self esteem which finally affects on mental health of an individual.

3.4 Occupational Status

Rather than income, occupational status of an individual or family is more reliable and static criteria to measure socio-economic status and its effect on the general health. Good occupational status or decent occupational status leads to have more quality healthy life. It is found that occupational status has a close link with access to good health care. Flow of income some time fluctuates, where as good occupation promises more reliable and regular income flow. Hence they can take right decisions regarding their health care planning. Sometime ill health may be a major reason for downward occupational mobility few studies have also proved that casual effect of occupational status on health behavior. Some time health disorders may be a constrained for up word occupational mobility¹².

Higher occupational status is less likely to be explosion to various occupational disorders. Also higher occupational status gives more peaceful mental health. Since employment status is more strongly associated with health than income. Experts left it play a vital role to access more economic resources. This may help to an individual for upward social mobility. Sociologist have founded on objection and subjective indicator of health and occupational status. Also it is observed that unscientific health practices and unhealthy habits can be seen more among unemployed people. This association has been found younger adults older adults and people with various disabilities also. However some of the studies have

observed that income and health are independently associated. Even after the food employment status the health problem of the lower income people were still increased. This might be due to an effect of material factors on health care¹².

4. Social Support and Social network

Social connections play a vital role as in major social determinant of health. Social supports not only give material recourses but also they provide love, emotions and attachments to an individual. Social support is a type of assistance that people will normally receive through their established social network. Social network provides vital information's about healthy life style or hospital care. Certain studies have shown that good social network, results in positive impact on physical and mental health. Social networks predict the risk of all causes and cause specific health disorders. Social network also has a history in providing good mental health care to the rural folks. Social network and social support have also helped in survival of some major illness.

Certain epidemiologists felt social connections may help in avoiding on set of various infectious diseases. On other hand good social network can also be a negative impact on health outcomes. Sometime people may use their social network for bad health behavior (during users). Also few studies are going on association between social supports and give environment interactions. Social network and support may together use as social capital, member of the community can make use of social capital system for betterment of their health needs. Studies have also proved that there is a close association among social capital, health outcomes and communities social economic characteristics. It is also proved that that withdrawal from the social network resulted in some type of mental issues among the youths. Modern social network system in rural area has proven useful in providing culture specifics role in adopting western health care. Through social network support people will get influential, emotional and informational support to keep themselves away from both short term and long term consequences of various health problems¹³.

In a currently varying social order it is proved that relationship between a range of socio-economic distinctiveness and the health is very vital. It is established that education, poverty and income are the three main indi-

cators of the healthy society. Each of the indicator acts through diverse mechanisms on health issues. “Socio-economic characters in health are wide spread, distinctive, dynamic across multicultural societies and for a diverse range of health issues. These social variables play a vital role. Also through this variables we can enhance our knowledge in understanding how biological path ways for some health disorders shaped by local culture”. Accepting the contribution of social and cultural factors on health reveals a new edge to get an idea on dynamics by which these variables participates as a major role concerning the beginning of disease and sequence until adopting a positive health behavior. All social-economic indicators act internally and externally to impact on health¹⁴.

4.1 Sense of Personal Efficacy

It relates to People’s ability to control over their emotional part of the life. People with a higher ability of controls of emotional will escape from stress related health disorders Experts also felt 1. Social gradient 2. Early life experience 3. Social exclusion also plays a vital in health issue rural people.

5. Conclusion

Healthy community is the future asset or capital for the development of the any society. Health is a substance of apprehension to all spear of the society. It is a high order to foresee a society which is free from the recurrent struggle against diseases. The development of good health is conditioned both by heredity and environment. If the society burdened by ill health people it would be a kind of overburden and it may be a curse for the any society for that matter. Poverty, income, education level are some of the vital and major pushing factors for the poor health status of any community in India¹⁵. In the same way, it is revealed that existing social determinants with respect to the public health problems are viewed as a major hurdle to the overall development of an Indian economy. It is also known that poor health actually minimizes the human capital accumulation, which is a prerequisite for the national development. Govt need to address to overcome various social determinants soon.

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