

Need to Invest and Strengthen the Primary Health Care Globally: World Health Organization

Dear Editor,

Primary health care is indispensable to ensure easy access to health-care services, especially for the vulnerable sections of society and it plays an important role in the development of equitable society and the financial growth of a nation.^[1,2] For many decades, primary health care has given more emphasis on education and health sector, but it is the need of the hour to review the same and take adequate measures to improvise the same, including the incorporation of technology.^[2,3] Primary health care encompasses a wide gamut of services, including health promotion, screening, awareness campaigns, and basic services (viz., immunization, family planning, and treatment for acute and chronic illnesses).^[3]

Moreover, the overall emphasis is on providing the desired care for people and facilitating optimal health and well-being and not only treating a solitary disease or condition.^[4] Acknowledging the fact and the trends that the incidence and prevalence of chronic diseases (such as noncommunicable diseases and cancer) is expanding each year, and this coupled with a rise in life expectancy; it is the need of the hour to invest in primary health care.^[3,4] The presence of a strengthened primary health care will aid in the early detection, screening, and treatment of people at the grassroots level and will simultaneously provide information to the local communities to prevent and manage these diseases.^[1,2]

Another important fact that justifies the need of the strengthening of the primary health care is the high out-of-pocket expenditure on health care.^[5] The available global estimates clearly depict that each year millions of people are pushed into extreme poverty due to the catastrophic expenditures on health, especially in low- and middle-income nations.^[3,5] This is despite the trend of a gradual rise in the proportion of funds allocated to the health sector by the government and is a direct marker that funds are not being utilized efficiently.^[3] Keeping all the above problems in mind, it is very much important to strengthen the primary health care; otherwise, we have to extensively spend in therapeutic care and also deal with massive caseload on the public and private health-care delivery system.^[1,2]

Moreover, it is vital to understand that investments directed toward primary health care not only save money, but also provide a valid ground for the nations to develop.^[3] This is primarily because healthy people will not be absent from the

work and will effectively contribute toward productivity.^[4] Further, it has been regarded as the most affordable way to meet the potential health challenges affecting the world's population.^[4] Even the World Health Organization has advocated for more investment in primary health care, in the global mission to accomplish universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals.^[3,4] Our aim should be to ensure that regardless of any determinant, all sections of society are able to readily access and avail basic health-care services.^[1,4]

In conclusion, strengthening of the primary health care has been identified as one of the most crucial elements to address the health problems affecting the general population and thus the governments and program managers should work in a concerted and coordinated manner to accomplish the same.

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There are no conflicts of interest.

Saurabh RamBihariLal Shrivastava, Prateek Saurabh Shrivastava¹

Vice-Principal Curriculum, Member of the Medical Education Unit and Institute Research Council, Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth –

Deemed to be University, Ammapettai, Nellikuppam, Chengalpattu,

¹Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth – Deemed to be University, Ammapettai, Nellikuppam, Chengalpattu, Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu, India

Address for correspondence: Dr. Saurabh RamBihariLal Shrivastava, Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth (SBV) – Deemed to be University, Tiruporur - Guduvancherry Main Road, Ammapettai, Nellikuppam, Chengalpattu, Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu - 603 108, India.
E-mail: drshrishri2008@gmail.com

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