



IMPACT OF DRUG PRICES ON ELDERLY POPULATION IN INDIAN SCENARIO.

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Abstract-

The rising cost of medication is a global health concern that significantly affects the elderly population. This project aims to understand how increased medication costs impact the health outcomes of the elderly and to explore strategies for mitigating these effects. Conducted online due to pandemic constraints, this study highlights the negative impact of high medication prices on the elderly and suggests that collaboration between government and private sectors is essential to ensure affordable medication.

Introduction-

Prescription drug spending is notably higher for individuals over 65 compared to younger populations. As the global population ages, the cost of pharmaceutical care for the elderly is expected to rise. Despite being just one component of medical care, these costs are increasing rapidly due to technological advancements and higher usage rates. It is essential to consider these costs in the context of reducing elderly disability, improving their economic conditions, and understanding the relationship between medication costs and other healthcare aspects.

The increasing cost of medication has created significant challenges for millions of elderly individuals in India and globally. Data from the Wall Street Journal indicates that while food and alcohol prices have risen by 2.8% and clothing by 5.7%, pharmaceutical prices have surged by 9.8% in recent years (Tuttle, 2016). The elderly, who often live on fixed incomes and require more prescriptions than other age groups, are particularly affected by these rising prices. This paper explores why the elderly struggle to afford medication, the health burdens this creates, and potential solutions to alleviate these challenges.

Many seniors live on fixed incomes, and high prescription costs can create barriers to accessing necessary medications. They often face difficult choices between paying bills, buying food, or refilling their prescriptions, leading to medication nonadherence and additional health complications. A study published in the Journal of Pharmaceutical Health Services Research found that 2.4% of seniors reported skipping medication in the past 12 months due to high costs, with nonadherence increasing to 7% over the past 24 months (Jensen & Xu, 2016).

In India, the demographic transition over the past 50 years has resulted in nearly tripling the population over the age of 60 (Government of India, 2011). This trend is expected to continue, with the proportion of Indians aged 60 and older projected to rise from 7.5% in 2010 to 11.1% by 2025 (UNDESA, 2008). By 2050, the number of elderly in India is expected to surpass the population of children below 14 years (Raju, 2006). Analysis of morbidity patterns indicates that the elderly experience a greater burden of ailments, particularly chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders,

and degenerative conditions (Ingle & Nath, 2008). This paper will analyze these morbidity patterns and explore potential strategies to address the healthcare needs of the elderly.

Aims and Objectives :

Aims-

This study aims to identify and describe specific challenges related to the affordability of medications among the elderly population and determine the factors contributing to these challenges. The goal is to inform future health policy decisions in India and highlight areas where data gaps exist. The study will conduct a literature review, including scholarly journal articles, books, program documentation, and reports from both non-governmental and governmental organizations. Additionally, surveys using questionnaires will be conducted to understand the real problems faced by the elderly and potential solutions.

Objectives-

- 1. Understand Medication Costs:** Examine why high medication costs lead to delayed medication use among the elderly and identify possible solutions to alleviate this financial burden.
- 2. Indian Perspective ;** Identify key challenges to healthcare access for the elderly in India, focusing on physical barriers to healthcare access.
- 3. Affordability Constraints;** Investigate the constraints and limitations related to healthcare affordability among the Indian elderly and propose possible solutions.
- 4. Disease Burden and Affordability:** Assess the disease burden and affordability issues faced by the Indian elderly through surveys conducted via Google Forms, emails, and WhatsApp in the local area.

Significance of the Study

Given the demographic transition in India and globally, with the elderly population nearly tripling over the past 50 years (Government of India, 2011), it is crucial to examine the implications of population aging on pharmacological care costs and overall healthcare resources. This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of these issues, highlight the importance of addressing them at the public level, and suggest future policy directions under a universal health coverage framework.

Medication pricing significantly impacts the elderly, often draining their income and leading to serious health repercussions when they cannot afford to refill their prescriptions. This nonadherence can result in worsened health conditions, higher hospital readmission rates, and longer hospital stays. Given the elderly's higher risk for multiple comorbidities and polypharmacy, addressing medication pricing is critical. This study will explore how both the private and public sectors can collaborate to overcome these challenges.

Review of Literature

Key References

1. Health of the Elderly in India: Challenges of Access and Affordability** (2012) - This study explores India's demographic distribution, recent transitions, morbidity patterns, determinants of healthcare access, and affordability concerns among the elderly.
2. Cost of Pharmacological Care of the Elderly: Implications for Healthcare Resources** (February 2003) - This article discusses the implications of medication costs on healthcare resources.
3. Prescription Drugs and the Elderly** by Jeannette Rogowski - This article examines the impact of prescription drug costs on the elderly.
4. Medicines in India: Accessibility, Affordability, and Quality** by Prachi Singh et al. (March 2020) - This article addresses issues related to medication accessibility, affordability, and quality in India.

Research Methodology

Title of Study

“A Study on the Impact of Drug Prices on the Elderly Population”

Methodology

This descriptive research utilizes a well-structured questionnaire for data collection. Surveys were conducted using Google Forms, with questionnaires sent via email and WhatsApp to a random sample of 100 individuals.

Sampling Technique

- Random Sampling
- Sample Size: 100
- Target Population: Elderly individuals contacted through email and WhatsApp.

Ethical Consideration

Data collected were maintained and used exclusively for research purposes.

Tools of Analysis

Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using sum and percentage methods.

Limitations of the Study

1. The reliability of the data depends on the responses received, as the study was conducted online.
2. The small sample size relative to the total elderly population of India introduces potential sampling errors.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

1. Senior Citizen Status:

- 30% identified as senior citizens
 - 60% had senior citizens in their family
 - 10% did not have senior citizens in their family
- **Interpretation**:** About 90% of Indian families have senior citizens.

2. **Chronic Disease and Medication Use:**

- 30% had one senior citizen with a chronic disease
 - 40% had two
 - 20% had more than two
 - 8% had no idea or no senior citizen
 - 2% had no disease
- **Interpretation**:** Most Indian families have one or two senior citizens with chronic diseases.

3. **Source of Income:**

- 45% were pensioners
 - 13% worked part-time
 - 40% had no income and were dependent
 - 2% could not comment
- **Interpretation**:** A significant proportion of Indian elderly are dependent on others.

4. **Monthly Medication Expenses:**

- 4% spent less than one thousand rupees
- 18% spent more than one thousand rupees
- 30% spent more than five thousand rupees
- 48% spent more than ten thousand rupees

****Interpretation****: A large proportion of the elderly population spends substantial amounts on medication monthly.

5. **Perception of Medication Pricing:**

- 95% believed drugs were overpriced
- 3% did not think so
- 2% could not comment

****Interpretation****: Most participants believe that drugs for chronic diseases are overpriced.

6. **Insurance Plan Utilization:**

- 15% had insurance plans covering prescription drugs
- 80% did not
- 5% had no idea

****Interpretation****: The majority of elderly individuals or their families do not have insurance plans for prescription drugs.

Conclusion

This study highlights the critical issue of high medication costs for the elderly and its impact on their health and financial stability. It underscores the need for collaborative efforts between the government and private sectors to ensure affordable medication for the elderly, thereby improving their health outcomes and quality of life.