

While India is advancing in every thinkable aspect, women's health and access to healthcare at right time is still something to catch up with

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On International Women's Day, Ravi Kunduru, CEO, QurHealth stresses that women's health is overlooked by many societies and the reason can be deeply rooted in socio-cultural practices

Since the beginning healthcare has been more accessible to men. It was for decades even the medical studies were more male-centric and the results were later automatically applied to the other gender. The attitude of ignoring women's health has been in practice for a long time. When we think things couldn't have gone more wrong for women, the pandemic has made it even more difficult for women. Women took up the lion's share of unpaid responsibilities that were brought upon by the unpredictable lockdowns and the essential care required by families during the time.

While India is advancing in every thinkable aspect, women's health and access to healthcare at right time is still something to catch up with. Health in totality is made up of many factors like biological, economic & social. When we talk about gender-specific health, the weightage goes towards men's health. Women's health is overlooked by many societies and the reason can be deeply rooted in socio-cultural practices.

Women are the pillars for a thriving society and healthy women can make choices that can spearhead the development of not only families but nations. Women's health-related issues are many and are influenced by a variety of factors such as gender inequality, early marriage, domestic violence, sexual abuse, hunger, poverty, illiteracy, and lack of access to adequate treatment. The major impact can be due to the socio-economic aspects that affect women's health.

According to research, the socioeconomic position is a major determinant of women's quality of life, and it also has a significant impact on children and families. Women's wealth and quality of life inequalities have existed for a long time, both locally and globally.

The urban-rural divide

In terms of population density, India is still predominantly rural. According to the results of the Provisional Census – 2011, the rural population is 833.1 million, or 68.84 per cent, of the overall population of 1210.2 million. However, according to the National Commission on Macroeconomics and Health (NCMH), over 80 per cent of health infrastructure, medical staff, and other health resources are concentrated in metropolitan regions, which account for only 31 per cent of the population.

The women's health issues in rural areas start right before birth with a malnourished mother that births a malnourished child. The healthcare system itself is not in favor where gender bias leads to more difficulty. The continuing discrimination in terms of health difficulties can also be attributed to the complex structure of culture and socio-economic elements present in patriarchal Indian society.

Digital health adoption a way to address women's health issues

The stigma that prevails with women's menstrual, sexual, and reproductive health issues has prevented many women from accessing non-judgmental assistance. There is a critical need for a full-stack and comprehensive approach to women's healthcare.

Digital health is the bridge that can connect the dots between women & health. The kind of digital healthcare that we need should be accessible and supports equitable and universal access to quality health services; improves the efficiency and sustainability of health systems in providing high-quality, affordable, and equitable care; and strengthens and scales up health promotion, disease prevention, diagnosis, management, rehabilitation, and palliative care.

Women can prioritise their health with digital healthcare without having to worry about missing work or household responsibilities. It has the potential to make healthcare available to them right in their own homes. Furthermore, digital healthcare can be utilised to enhance sex education and knowledge of sexual health issues. It can assist women in receiving an unbiased diagnosis and treatment.