Chapter - I

Introduction
Health is a basic need of every individual and plays a vital role in his educational, social and economic development. It is essential for individuals to lead a happy life.

Good health is a pre-requisite for a healthy community upon which an economically viable society can be built up. The progress of the society greatly depends on the standard of health of its people.

Health is fundamental to national progress in any sphere. In terms of resources for economic development, nothing can be considered of higher importance than the health of the people. Even the ancient proverb ‘Health is wealth’ also confirms this fact.

Health as a basic necessity of humans and health care as an important means of protecting that human right are fundamental to the effective delivery of community health care. Health care should be accessible to the whole population. The word ‘accessible’ is being used here in its broadest context to mean availability, when needed, free from economic barriers, unlimited by social or cultural distinctions and within the reasonably easy reach.
Every individual should take care of his own health. If he follows certain health norms, he can avoid many health hazards. In order to have good health, people should have access to certain general health services at a reasonable cost. Most of the people in India and the rural people in particular who are poor economically, socially and educationally do not have adequate resources and proper knowledge for ensuring a healthy life standard. Hence, it is the responsibility of the Government to provide health services to its people.

1.1 Views on Health

The views expressed by great personalities on health are discussed below.

According to *Buddha*, of all the gains, the gains of health are the highest and best. Health is not only essential for leading a happy life for an individual but it is also necessary for all productive activities in the society.

*Charaka*, the renowned Ayurvedic physician, is known to have said, "Health was vital for ethical, artistic, material and spiritual development of man".

According to Herophilas:

"When health is absent, wisdom cannot reveal itself; art cannot manifest, strength cannot fight, wealth becomes useless and intelligence cannot be applied".
As such, good health must be a primary objective of national development programmes. It is a precursor to improve the quality of life for a major portion of mankind.

An individual or a person can be said to possess good health when he is physically, mentally and spiritually sound. The ancient proverb ‘A sound mind in a sound body’ confirms this fact. Life is also not worth living on this planet unless and until the people are physically and mentally fit.

From the above discussion, it is evident that health is very important for the development of individuals, society and the nation in different spheres. For possessing good health, individuals require information relating to health care.

1.2 Health care

Health care implies a broad spectrum of services including primary health care, the integration of preventive and therapeutic services, health education, the problems of doctors and rural people, family planning and control of environmental hazards.

1.3 Health care Information

The services namely curative, preventive and rehabilitative services provided by the government to the people enabling them to maintain good health are known as primary health care services. The information that should be provided to them about these services can be termed as health care information.
Information is essential for the effective functioning of all organisations and individuals. It is also essential for making rational decisions. In the provision and management of health care services, easy access to relevant and up-to-date information can make the difference between life and death. Many factors can affect an individual's needs and use of information, including age, sex, cultural, social and educational background, professional status, work environments and accessibility of information services.

Health care information, being essential to every person, attracts common interest from all sections of any society. Therefore, people are to be conscious to have access to the best possible health information to enjoy good health which may be preventive, curative and rehabilitative. Health care information is concerned not only with message development, but with marketing principles, media influence, and social influence.

Health care information is information about people's health and what they, the government, and others are doing about it. It describes the incidence, prevalence, and causes of major diseases, as well as the availability and effectiveness of curative activities and the community to improve environmental conditions. Health care information as used here is an organised and interpreted data about the health status, resources, activities and events related to integrated basic health services.

In order to ensure good health and welfare of the people in any country, it is necessary that information should flow freely and rapidly from policy makers to the grass root level. A well organised information system which collects, processes and disseminates information is essential to have free and rapid flow of information to all those who are ignorant of health care.
1.4 Statement of the Problem

India is the largest democratic country in the world. According to 1991 census, majority of the people (74.2%) live in rural areas. Most of the rural people are illiterates. Possessing of good health is essential for their social, economical and educational development. The constitution of India aims at the elimination of ill-health and directs the state with regard to raising the level of nutrition and the standard of living of the people, securing the health and strength of the people.

India is signatory to the Alma Ata Declaration of 1978 and committed to attaining the goal 'Health For All' by 2000 AD, through the primary health care approach. The National Health policy was officially adopted by the Indian Parliament in 1983. 'Health For All' by 2000 AD is also envisaged in National Health Policy of India. Government of India has started concentrating on the development of rural health infrastructure to provide primary health care services to the most of the rural population which had been by and large remained neglected. The delivery of health care is the foundation of rural health care system and forms an intergrel part of the national health systems. Primary health care is the essential health care made universally accessible to individuals and acceptable to them through their full participation and at a cost the community and the country can afford.

Primary health care pays particular attention to the point of initial contact between the members of the community and the health services.
Sophisticated and specialised needs are referred to at secondary and tertiary levels. Primary health care institutions in rural areas are primary health centres, sub-centres and community health centres.

Though Government is providing health care facilities to rural people they are not reaching them in an effective way. They are also not well aware of the value of health which is essential for their socio-economic and educational development. They are not utilising the health services provided by the government. They are also unaware of the services provided by the government. It may be due to many factors namely illiteracy, poverty, customs and traditions and lack of proper health care information.

Man has right to acquire information. If such information is not provided, the consequences can be dangerous. Information has great value in the present day information based society. It plays an important role in today's complex economic and social environment. Information is required in every field of human activity. A housewife requires information on the availability and the price of household items, a farmer needs information on climatic conditions, seeds and marketing and so on. If such information can be provided to them at the right time, they will take right decisions. People residing in rural areas require information on health care to enjoy good health.

Primary health care awareness is to be created among the rural people by providing health care information. This information is to be provided to rural people through primary health centres, media and libraries.
It is in this context the research topic entitled "Health Care Information to Rural People in Andhra Pradesh With Special References to Chittoor District" has been undertaken to survey the health information needs of rural people, the satisfaction of rural people with regard to health services, awareness on different health programmes, the channels from which they obtain information and barriers in getting health care information. It has also been undertaken to suggest effective channels to disseminate health care information to rural people, the role of health professionals in the promotion of health care information and the role of public libraries in the dissemination of health care information to them.