The study titled “The Health Status of BPL Families in Kerala in the Era of Economic Reforms: Utilization of Health Care, Problems of Access and Cost Burden” is an attempt to examine the health status of BPL families composed of SC/ST/ Dalit population of Kerala in the post reform period. The study has made an analysis of health expenditure of BPL families and the alternative financing mechanisms employed by them to finance health expenditure focussing on the pattern of access and utilization of health care. The primary data for the study has been collected from BPL population of five taluks of Kottayam district by using a pre-tested questionnaire. The study found that, since the advent of new economic policy, a tremendous change has occurred in the morbidity pattern Kerala. The diseases of affluence began to co-exist with the diseases of poverty among all categories of population. Since the advent of new economic policy, the government started scaling down public spending on health with a deliberate policy. As a result, there was a cumulative effect of quality deterioration of public health system due to low fiscal space and the uncontrolled growth of private health care system led to a tremendous increase in OOP expenses for health care.

The study also examines the effects of socio-economic status, education, consumption pattern, health awareness etc on the health status of BPL families. The major finding of the study is that the coexistence of communicable and non communicable diseases, low public health activities, changes in the consumption pattern of individuals, low access and utilization of health care, operational inefficiency of public hospitals, high cost of treatment etc are the major contributory factors affecting the health status of the respondents in the study area.

Key words

Neo-liberalism, Marginalized groups, Health care, Over the counter use of medicine, Life style diseases, Sedentary life style, Intoxicants, Social prevention Operational inefficiency, Unfair practices, Morbidity, Clinical trial, Out of pocket expenditure, Wage cost, Health care financing, Health insurance, managed care, Indemnity.