Abstract of Thesis

State, Market and Utilization Pattern of Health Services: A Study of Punjab

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The study is primarily based on the primary data generated through a comprehensive sample survey from 300 households spread across the state. It is devoted to utilization pattern, morbidity burden and treatment costs of health services in Punjab. As there is a dearth of such information, the study fulfills this gap which will be helpful to the state authorities for proper planning of state health sector. Further, the study also explores the determinants and preferences of the people in utilizing health services across different social status households and locations.

The study found that public health facilities in the state did not increase since the mid-1980s. Efficiency of public health system has reached to nadir, largely due to low allocation and weak monitoring system. Across the different categories of households, there were wide variations in seeking treatment and actual cost of treatment incurred by the patients. Although the incident of morbidity was very high, a considerable proportion of patients suffering from various diseases did not seek treatment from qualified health personnel. Most of them are getting treatment from private sector hospitals/clinics including RMPs/chemists. It means, in spite of a well developed public infrastructure in rural Punjab, rural poor could not get the benefit of such infrastructure. Moreover, people suffering from diseases have to bear expenditure out of their pockets.

It is suggested that the state government and professional medical bodies evolve certain rules and regulations and develop appropriate strategies to regulate the private health sector in the state. Further, inadequacies in the existing number of public health institutions and many shortcomings in their functioning such as the non-availability of medicines, inadequate medical staff, shortage of buildings and equipments must be removed on priority basis.