Preface

Studying the health sector of a nation is, on one hand, a very simple and also a very complex task. It is simple because health affects each and every person in a country, and at the micro level, every person seems to be able to be equipped to a large extent to take care of his/her health. It is complex, particularly at the macro level, because no single factor can determine good health, and health issues operate in a complex dynamic socioeconomic set-up. Health status, therefore, has being the subject of intense research by economists, sociologists, policy makers as well as the medical sciences.

Health status of the population of a nation has therefore emerged unanimously as a crucial determinant of economic development throughout the world. Unfortunately, however, health is an area which has received the least importance in the development plans of most emerging nations including India. Investment in the health sector in India is one of the lowest in the world. India for instance, which has experienced almost 9 p.c. growth rate consistently for the last decade, has emerged as one of the nations in the world with high growth potential and has been the centre of attention by investors all over the world. However, records of health statistics in the country are lower than even some of the less developing countries of the world. In terms of the various health statistics also, India ranks much lower than the medium human development nations, whose growth rate is much lower than India.

Understanding the gravity of the problem of the health sector is incomplete without the knowledge of health economics. The work, therefore, touches upon the basic issues of health economics so that the reader is able to understand the tools and techniques that can be utilised to understand the real life problems of the health sector.

The rapid growth of the private health sector makes accessibility and affordability more difficult for the rural poor, who still dominate the demographic structure of India. Though India has a very strong network of public health system, spread throughout the entire country, health care delivery suffers due to rampant corruption in the health sector at the service delivery point, which has a depressing effect on the health status in the country. All this is the result of inadequate application of management skills and non-professional attitude in the public health system. The result

is that in spite of some of the most innovative policies in the health sector in India, the desired and requisite health outcomes have not been achieved. Therefore in spite of slowly but gradually rising investment in the health sector and announcement of new policies in the health sector, India not only is burdened with poor health indicators, but also has been increasingly facing the dual problems of emerging infectious diseases as well as chronic degenerative diseases. The former is the result of poor implementation of public health programmes, and the latter is due to demographic transition with increase in life expectancy. The work has therefore touched upon the discussion of the various issues related to management, which becomes highly relevant for the successful functioning of the health sector and deriving the desired health outcomes.

It is evident that if India desires to be among the progressive nations of the world, there is no alternative but to have a serious relook into the functioning of the health sector and its associated problems. It is also imperative to understand the behavioural pattern of the health outcomes both in the urban and rural sectors of the country. Due to wide diversity of the socioeconomic and environmental factors prevalent in the urban and rural areas in India, all determinant factors of the health outcomes cannot be expected to behave in a similar manner to provide the policy and decision makers in the health sector with a holistic picture of the health status and their determinants. The present work therefore has been undertaken with the objective of identifying the relevant and crucial factors which determine each and every outcome of the health sector, along with their relevant weightage. This has been done separately for the urban and the rural sector so that no uniform health policy is applied at all times and at all places, with the wrong notion that health outcomes too will be uniform at all times and all places. The present work therefore attempts to take each individual determinant of the various indicators of health status and study their importance in influencing each individual health indicator. It is hoped that policy makers will be able to appreciate the relative weight of the various determinants of health in India from the findings of the study and formulate policies on health accordingly.

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