



The Lakshmi Mittal and Family
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Dear Friends,

We are delighted to present to you the May edition of the monthly newsletter by the [Lancet Citizens' Commission on Reimagining India's Health System](#). This month's newsletter covers a diverse range of pressing issues in India's health sector. We delve into the importance of political parties addressing gender gaps in their election manifestos and question whether the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana requires a design overhaul. The challenges of India's neonatal burden and the state of public healthcare in BJP and Congress manifestos are explored. We also tackle misperceptions among healthcare providers regarding ORS for child diarrhea, and the need for quality maternal care in rural areas. Public-private partnerships are highlighted as a pathway to universal health, alongside an analysis of socioeconomic and geographic inequalities in antenatal and postnatal care from 2016 to 2021. Lastly, we examine temporal changes in BMI categories across India's states and union territories from 1999 to 2021.

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Views & Opinions

[Why political parties' election manifestos must address gender gaps in India's Health Sector](#)

Ensuring the inclusion of such fundamental social issues in the manifestos of political parties is an



important first step towards stimulating a public conversation. Manifestos should be more specific in addressing women's health issues and must include an explicit focus on strengthening primary healthcare. Setting up investments substantially in improving the infrastructure and workforce of primary healthcare centres is crucial to ensure quality health services for all, especially women and marginalized communities, writes *Poonam Muttreja*.

[Does the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana need a design change?](#)

Launched in 2018, 'Ayushman Bharat' programme aims for universal health coverage through health centers and Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), offering ₹5 lakh coverage per family annually for over 12 crore families. Despite issuing 34.27 crore cards and treating 6.5 crore patients, some states' hospitals report unpaid dues. Does PM-JAY need a redesign, *discuss Avani Kapur and Nachiket Mor in a conversation moderated by Zubeda Hamid*.



[India's neonatal burden and the challenges ahead](#)

Massive emphasis has been laid on reducing child mortality burden – under 5 mortality rate has improved from 109 deaths per 1,000 live births during 1990s to 42 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2019-21, according to the National Family Health Surveys. Despite this and significant strides in infrastructural development, literacy rates, healthcare, and economic prosperity, reducing the country's neonatal burden remains a pressing issue, *write B. K. Agarwal and Shubhangi Misra*.



[Where Does 'Public Healthcare' Stand in the BJP and Congress Election Manifestos?](#)

The encounter with the pandemic exposed the fragilities and challenges of the Indian public healthcare system. However, the fact that it remained the only resort for millions underlines its resilience [...] The unregulated private healthcare system remained largely dysfunctional and apathetic as wave after wave of the pandemic wreaked havoc. Regrettably, the manifestos of both the leading contenders completely miss the impact of the pandemic on the healthcare systems and the people, *write Sapna Mishra and Malu*



Misperception keeping healthcare providers from prescribing life-saving ORS for child diarrhoea in India

Misperceptions of healthcare providers has been identified as one of the major reasons why Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS), which could be a live-saving treatment in diarrhoea cases, is not being prescribed in India for children who suffer from diarrhoea, according to a study. Among the five authors in the study was Arnab Mukherji, chairperson, Post Graduate Programme in Public Policy and Management at Indian Institute of Management - Bangalore (IIMB).



Enabling last-mile delivery of quality maternal care within rural communities

Access to quality healthcare and maternal care is of paramount importance especially in rural regions, as it plays a pivotal role in the well-being and development of a nation as a whole. Rural and remote areas, often face unique and pressing challenges when it comes to healthcare. In these regions, maternal health stands out as a critical concern, as it directly impacts the lives of women and their children, contributing to the overall health of the community, *writes Sujay Santra.*



Public-private partnership: Pathway to health for all

The goal of universal health coverage (UHC) is one of the most significant commitments to equitable quality health care for all. India moved a step closer towards this in 2018 with the announcement of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, which has today enabled millions of beneficiary families to avail cashless treatment. But there are, in particular, significant challenges in the health care value chain, including gaps in the health care infrastructure, a divergence between rural and urban geographies, shortage of talent, to name a few, *writes Kirit Premjibhai*



Resources

[Socioeconomic and geographic inequalities in antenatal and postnatal care components in India, 2016–2021](#)

Despite the well-known importance of high-quality care before and after delivery, not every mother and newborn in India receive appropriate antenatal and postnatal care (ANC/PNC). Using India's National Family Health Surveys (2015–2016 and 2019–2021), we quantified the socioeconomic and geographic inequalities in the utilization of ANC/PNC among women aged 15–49 years and their newborns [...] To optimize maternal and newborn health in India, future interventions should aim to achieve universal coverage of all ANC/PNC components.



[Temporal change in prevalence of BMI categories in India: patterns across States and Union territories of India, 1999–2021](#)

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 seeks to end hunger and ensure access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food year-round by 2030. The SDG 3 aims to ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages. It is important to evaluate the nutritional status to devise effective policies to ascertain these goals. Body Mass Index (BMI) serves as a good metric for evaluating population-level nutritional status and future health risks. Also, the widespread and longstanding application of BMI contributes to its utility at the population level.



Featured Partner

Centre for Health Equity, Law & Policy is an initiative aimed of advancing and improving health delivery, access and outcomes through the development, sharing and use of knowledge on health-related law and policy as informed by India's constitutional framework, and her



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