

## Health information contents: Its delivery through various agencies

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### Abstract

Health awareness is a basic pre-requisite for leading comfortable life. Health is a basic human right and is essential for a social and economic development. Increasingly, health promotion is being recognized as an essential element of health development. This paper discusses the different agencies involved in disseminating health information to the people. This paper deals with the features of the health information sources. The sources highlighted include mass media like radio, television, newspaper, periodicals, human sources, institutional sources, internet and other sources of information and their usefulness in disseminating health information as a supporting agency are discussed.

**Keywords:** Health Information Contents, Agencies

### 1. Introduction

Health awareness is a process which effects changes in the health practices of people, knowledge and attitude related to such changes. Health awareness is closely connected with imparting of knowledge to the people about the principles of hygiene. It educates people for preserving and developing their physical and mental health. Health awareness is a basic pre-requisite for leading comfortable life. It is true that, one should not diagnose on their own, but at least one can take precautions to keep the routine disease away by reading health related information. In the context, library and information centre plays a significant role in disseminating or creating health awareness among society at large.

Health is a basic human right and is essential for a social and economic development. Increasingly, health promotion is being recognized as an essential element of health development. For health development health information is a vital tool to implement as per the strategic plans framed to benefit the entire community of the world. The prerequisites for health are peace, shelter, education, social security, social relations, food, income, the empowerment of women, stable eco-system, sustainable resources use, social justice, respect for human rights and equity. Above all poverty is the greatest threat to health.

The Five essential strategies for health promotion are:

1. Build public health policy.
2. Create supportive environments.
3. Strengthen community action.
4. Reorient health services.
5. Creating basic Medical record form Primary Health Centers and onwards.

Priorities for Health promotion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:

1. Promote social responsibility for health.
2. Increase investments for health development.
3. Consolidate and expand partnership between Government agencies, Pharma industry and related Research Institutions.

4. Increase community literacy and empower the individual.
5. Secure infrastructure for health promotion.
6. Primary Health centres with good medical recording system and infrastructure for the welfare of the society.

National Governments are called on to take initiative in fostering and sponsoring networks for health promotion [1].

Access to information would certainly enhance the capability of the individuals to make better use of the resources, take considered decisions and improve her quality of life. But women suffer from certain inherent problems viz. health, poverty, illiteracy, locational remoteness, male dominated families where she is denied exposure and access to information, which is crucial for her development as well as her family. Women lag behind in every sector. Obviously the nation cannot move ahead keeping the major portion of its population in dark. As a result, International organizations, various state and central Governments, NGO's and many corporate sectors are making efforts to provide health information support to women.

Health is another important area for which women need information support system. Women should know how to take care of their personal health. They must be informed about various health care programmes to keep their children and other family members away from diseases. Finally health care information should also include how to keep the environment clean [2].

### 2. Health Information Dissemination Mechanism

Information products and services are available, these cannot reach the end-users unless there is a good mechanism for disseminating such information. In our country, the information needed for rural and urban development, are disseminated by various agencies either through formal publications or through designated officials or through libraries and information centres. But the mechanisms are not well established and well developed. The available information often does not reach the end-users at proper time [3].

Women get health information through various sources that are often not geared to their specific requirements. NGOs and the Government departments generate information about women health. The ICT based information systems give pertinent information concerning the rural and urban sector activities but these are still general in nature. Family members and friends are often the main source of information. The male members of the family who have better access to information source often share relevant information [4].

The mass media provide indirect, one-way communication and include community, national and international radio and television as well as newspapers, magazines, comic books, cinema or other situations where a large number of people can be reached with information without personal contact [5]. By and large, health information can be disseminated in women through a variety of media. These are usually categorized into two broad classes namely the inter-personal and the mass media.

The prevailing women scenario is characterized by unemployment, social and environmental degradation, illiteracy and lack of health awareness, non-compatibility in agricultural environmental and macroeconomic policy and absence of appropriate planning in management of resources. Majority of these problems can be resolved only by programmes and action plans supported by motivated local people, performing and conscious government agencies and dynamic NGO's.

### 3. Agencies Involved in Dissemination of Health Information

This section presents the features of the health information sources. The channels highlighted include mass media (e.g., radio, television, teletext, videotext, newspapers, magazines, comics), human resources (e.g., family members, friends, neighbors, druggists, nurses, librarian, primary healthcare workers, social workers, doctors, Health workers, consultants, etc.), information service systems/institutional resources (e.g., libraries, Government organization, NGO, Health institutions, women organization, nature care centres), training and educational programs (e.g., professional preparation, workshops, computer-assisted), internet (online databases) and other (e.g., posters). For providing the necessary health information support required by women, a proper information dissemination mechanism has to be designed. At present the information is disseminated in the form of product and services. It normally supports women in common. They get information from various sources. The channels of information available to them are both formal and informal. The formal channels include radio and television, local Government information office, primary health care workers, and public library. The informal channels on the other hand constitute Village or Ward Heads and other elite group in the community. Friends and relatives, physicians, nurses, social workers, health workers as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) particularly the Women, have been cited as important informal channels of information [6].



Fig 1: Health Information Sources

#### Mass Media

Mass communication includes electronic and print media. Electronic media includes radio, television and satellite telecommunications, mobile phone. Print media encompasses books, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, and comics. It provides health information to women [1].

#### a) Radio

Radio plays a vital role in our modern society. It is faster and the most economic medium available in this electronic age.

Radio has established itself as the best means of communication. AIR, with its vast network of about 225 Radio Stations, broadcast programmes on health and family welfare. All AIR Stations broadcast family welfare programmes in the regional languages. The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India has signed a MoU with Prasar Bharati for broadcast of a half an hour Health programme for five days a week over 29 stations of All India Radio. AIR broadcast programmes including the equal segments of rural development scheme and hard-core agriculture with the

programmes on subjects like Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, employment schemes, loan, insurance and training facilities, sanitation, health & hygiene and nutrition etc. Radio plays and drama, health & family welfare programmes, programmes for women and children, farm and home programmes aimed at empowering women are the other important segments of the primary channels. These channels being the most accessible of all the AIR channels, strive to reach their audiences in the language most understood by all. Women programme of All India Radio covers the subjects related to socio-economic development of women, Health and Family Welfare, Food and Nutrition, Scientific Home Management, Women Entrepreneurship, Education including the adult education, women empowerment, gender issues, etc.

Health programmes are the regular broadcasts of All India Radio. The subjects covered in the regular broadcasts of health programmes are ; Raise in marriage-age, delay the first child, space between two children, terminal methods, maternal care, child survival, promotion of inter-spouse communication / male responsibility, neutralizing male preference syndrome, medical termination of the pregnancy, promotion of institutional legal provisions, management of Reproductive Tract Infections (RTIs) and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIS), Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulations and Prevention of Misuse) Act,1994, AIDS, drug abuse, breastfeeding, labor, girl child, disability, T.B, Leprosy and reproductive child health, etc. Wide publicity is being given to blood-donation and eye-donation. Suitable programmes have also been mounted against the drug abuse, tobacco consumption, illicit trafficking, AIDS and to create awareness about the rehabilitation and facilities being provided to the leprosy- affected persons/families. Special programmes in various formats are also being broadcast from AIR Stations across the country to create the awareness about the adverse child sex-ratio and to alter the negative mindset leading to the abortion of girl Child Foetus. Publicity was also given to the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act and the penalties contained therein to create the public opinion against the violation of its provisions. [7].

Today radio is facing a big challenge from television and has been pushed in to the background especially in the metropolitan cities. Radio has made some adjustments in its programmes and found new areas for itself where it is doing well, it has much potential, and also be obtained in a more meaningful way. Radio rebirth in the present times. Television needs time by appointments. While radio can be heard anywhere while jogging, driving or conversing. Today lives are running along many fast tracks technological innovations have made radio enabled mobile phones possible it is an entered dream of sound.

#### **b) Television**

Television (TV) came to India in 1950s on experimental basis with the transmission around Delhi only. Over a period of time it got other parts of the country. It is estimated that about 85 percent people in India have access to television, and 41 per cent of television viewers watch programmes on cable TV network along with national channel. Different channels show different health programmes. Visual medium is stronger than radio as images speak more loudly than words. Through these channels very interesting and informative programmes from all over the world can be seen. Through a satellite, communication has become easier and faster all over the world. Nowadays

Television (TV) is giving lot of importance in empowering women by telecasting good programmes to empower them in the areas of social, cultural, economical, educational, legal, decision making, health, technological, equal rights, freedom of expression, gender sensitization, etc. [8].

Television programmes are very useful and powerful media. Media educates men and women in many ways. They telecast programmes on animal husbandry, agriculture, family welfare, health and hygiene programmes for youths and women. Doordarshan many paid channels are also telecasted viz., Chandana, Colors Kannada, Zee Kannada, Kasturi, TV9, Suvarna plus, Samaya, Public TV, Jansri TV, Udaya and others. The above channels are telecasting not only entertainment and news but also useful programmes for women. There are so many educating programmes for women i.e. health care, agriculture, cooking recipes, sports and other useful programmes [9].

#### **c) Newspaper**

Newspapers, magazines and books are a good means of mass-communication. This is a print medium which travels far and wide. The newspapers have a very wide circulation and every literate person tries to go through them. They bring us the latest news, rates of the commodities, advertisements, employment news, matrimonial, health information and other information [10]. In this modern age newspapers play a very important role in promoting commerce, trade and business. Big corporate and industrial houses promote their products by giving spacious advertisements in newspapers. Classified advertisements, important public announcements and public notices also constitute the important content and material of newspapers. Sports, educational and campus news, dance drama, cultural activities and fine arts are some of the necessary features of all leading newspapers [11]. The major newspapers like Kannada Prabha, Prajavani, Samyuktha Karnataka, Vijaya Karnataka, Udayavani, Vijayavani, Deccan Herald, The Hindu, Times of India, Indian Express would, shape and influence the views, opinions and attitudes of thousands of readers throughout the state [12]. Mass media covers number of sources of information. Some of the popular one's are Kannada Newspaper. Newspapers are different from rural to urban. It may also provide information on better agricultural practices, health, nutrition and other high priority subjects. But due to illiteracy, this source remains inaccessible. In such a situation, library/librarian may help the people providing information services to those who cannot read. The newspapers are available in English, Kannada, Hindi and many local languages. They are the least costly of the print media and their contents cover day to day happenings which touch on people's lives includes Security, Transport, Political, Education, Social events, etc. Newspapers give place to the news related to Crime, Political, Sports, State, International, Regional, Tenders/Notifications, Business, Market, TV and Leisure, Advertisements and Economics. Discussions on issues related to women in general are completely missing.

Women health magazines are also necessary. They should be in regional languages and deal with Arogya, Arogya vani, Arogya Sandesh, Health and Nutrition, Women's Health. Arogyavani, Health, Prevention, Fitness, Yoga, Swasthya Aur Jeevan, Health Plus, Chandrodaya, HEAL, Yog Sandesh, Health Vision, etc., for knowledge improvement of women.

Magazines as well as newspapers have sections for women, Kannada prabha includes 'Sakhi' which comes on Saturday in

two pages and paper explore the beauty and essence of women in this supplement. A great reading for happy times, family welfare, cookery, fashion, glamour, beauty tips, home making and all the world where a women has a role to play, are also included in one health page which comes on Wednesday. Vijaya Karnataka prints a supplement 'LavalVK' which comes once in a week. Udyavani's - 'Avalu' comes on Wednesday, Samyukta Karnataka's - 'SKcity', Vijaya vani's 'Lalita'. Only one page highlights women related topics and one page is devoted for culture and fashion subjects. Beauty tips of celebrities are given here. Prajavani's - 'Bhumika' comes on Saturday, which covers variety of subjects that deal with women problems and discussions by experts to overcome those problems.

### **Institutional resources**

Institutional sources play a vital role in disseminating health information to women. State Government have set up information centres to disseminate health information required by the people. Women consult various institutional resources for supporting their various information requirements. Preferred Institutional Sources are Associations and Learned Organizations, Self Help Groups, Non-Government Organizations, Library, Research Centre, Government office, Health and Family welfare Department, Hospitals, Women organization, Health Institutions/Associations, Natural care centres, etc.

Government departments and agencies publish lots of information in print and electronic formats. Governments at all levels play an important role in producing information for the society they serve. In many occasions, Government officials may need information about the society in order to make decisions relating to economic, social and political issues<sup>[13]</sup>. Some of the information produced by government is grey literature comprising reports such as National HIV/AIDS reports, gazettes, population statistics, census data, government notices, policy documents etc. This can be done through the various Government agencies including the public libraries or the government Websites.

Libraries have been playing a pivotal role in disseminating health information to the society at large and making more information consciousness than ever before 'Health is Wealth'. The basic precautions and health related information is must for each and every individual to take care of the routine diseases of life. Libraries particularly medical based information helps the society in creating and disseminating health awareness among the people. Indian council of medical research is a pioneer organization establishing national and regional health libraries to achieve the goals of providing health awareness and health related information to the masses. Libraries under the frame work of a very popular service, namely outreach programme, can act as a catalyst, so that information on various programmes reaches them directly. Books is available on different aspects of women like changing status of women in rural/urban areas, victimization of women, violence, rape, dowry deaths, women exploitation, crimes, women health and environment, women professionals and entrepreneurs. These printed literatures depicted the real picture of women and problem of the women in the societies<sup>[14]</sup>. All concerned Government departments, institutions, NGO's, women organizations needs to have an integrated approach through a common network.

### **Human resources**

A majority of the women preferred the most traditional method of expressing their feelings through discussion with friends or in an interested group. Human sources constitute the major preferred method for rural/urban area. Neighbours, friends, family members are the top three most preferred human resources by women for supporting their health information requirements. Other human sources are social workers, anganawadi teachers, concerned professionals, Government information officers and librarian, health care professionals including pharmacists, physicians, nurses, health workers, and chemists were the main sources of health information. Similarly with general health information, health care professionals are the most common sources for getting health information.

### **Internet**

Searching health information on web has become an integral part of today's world, and many people turn to the Web for healthcare information and healthcare assessment<sup>[15]</sup>. Internet as a valuable medium of communication, both for reaching people by email and for broader casting of information from a website. Many print and web documents available in internet, some of whom have their own Websites/pages. Some individuals disseminate health information through Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, WhatsApp, You-tube etc, while others publish health information in print as text books, monographs or articles in journals, magazines or newsletters.

Government of Karnataka has its own website <http://www.kar.nic.in/>. Through their website it announces the health programmes. Government of Karnataka has provided all their information on their website and also some useful links which will help citizens and many other to get more information on the state.

### **Department of Health and Family Welfare**

Karnataka state is one of the pioneer states in the country in providing comprehensive public health services to its people. Even before the concept of Primary Health centres was conceived by the government of India, the state had already made a beginning in establishing a number of PHU's for providing comprehensive Health Care, and a delivery system consisting of curative, preventive, promotive and rehabilitation health care, to the people of the state. HEALTH is an asset to every person<sup>[16]</sup>.

### **Department of Women & Child Development**

The Department of Women and Child Development under the Ministry of Human Resource Development is the key agency for development and welfare of women and children. Most of the provincial governments also carry out women related activities through Social Welfare Departments. Ministry of Human Resource Development and Ministry of Information Technology have formulated a number of schemes, particularly in the area of education and training in ICT. These schemes can succeed with gender-sensitivity and removal of regional biases. The Department is responsible for the welfare and development of women, children, elderly and disabled in the State. Besides implementing developmental programmes, it formulates necessary policies, programmes and schemes and also co-ordinates the efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organisations working in the field of women, children, elderly and disabled<sup>[17]</sup>.

The internet has changed the way people search for various types of information, entertainment and communication needs. Internet use to acquire health information is increasingly common. There is research on online health information seeking and women's health. Bowen *et al.* [18] discovered that women's health-related internet use could be predicted by level of general health perception, older age and higher income. Pandey *et al.* stated that women increasingly relied on the internet to acquire health information in addition to traditional sources [19]. The internet is transforming health care, and has the potential to combine all existing health information sources. The general public increasingly uses the internet as a complementary resource for health information [20].

#### 4. Conclusion

The technology trends will lead to many new developments throughout the Health Information value chain. Primary information on health, sanitation, water, environment of the region and healthcare facilities should be available in locally and surrounding areas, etc. Health awareness development i.e. development in the fields of nutrition, sanitation, community health, prevention of water, air pollution are needed. For providing the health necessary support required for women development, a proper information infrastructure has to be developed. As such proper awareness has to be created among the end-users regarding the availability and usefulness of the facilities created. The government produce a good amount of health information. Such information should be quickly brought to the notice of the users through the proposed facilities. This is only possible when the government officials and other concerned people become more alert in the matter. Hence every effort should be made to improve the health condition of women and for that proper information infrastructure has to build up at any cost [21].

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