



The Lakshmi Mittal and Family
SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY
Harvard Global Research Support Centre India



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 highlights how a fund crunch in the US can be an opportunity for India to become a world leader in science. A Lancet study finds elderly Indians travel 14.5 km on average to access care, frailty among older adults is closely linked to depression, and maybe it is time to rethink elderly care in India. Obesity in women is rising, with nearly half over 35 now overweight. Gaps in elderly care and mental health funding persist, drug-resistant infections often go untreated, and adolescent health concerns—like anaemia and poor diet—need urgent focus in India. Climate change poses hidden health risks, while India's health insurance system faces challenges in coverage and trust. Experts also highlight the need to expand generics and biosimilars to ensure more affordable care.

Visit our
Website

Views & Opinions

[A fund crunch in the US, an opportunity for India](#)

This may be a once-in-a-lifetime moment for India to reap a rich harvest in pursuit of the country's ambition to become a world leader in science. To do so, India would need to recognise that high-quality science is the result of the confluence of a



number of key factors, the most important being the scientists themselves, equipped with the right skills and driven by the hunger to generate knowledge, *writes Vikram Patel*



Elderly Indians travel 14.5 km on average to see a doctor: Lancet study

Delayed treatment leads to complications, hospitalisations, and unnecessary suffering. For elderly women, people living alone, and those from lower-income households, the impact is compounded by limited mobility, financial constraints, and social isolation. When care is distant and difficult to reach, many are forced to choose between their health and their survival needs, *says Poonam Muttreja*.



Obesity in Indian women is a growing crisis: Nearly half over 35 are overweight

The problem of obesity is not limited to urban or affluent women. In fact, the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019–21) found that 33.2% of urban women and 19.7% of rural women in India are overweight or obese (defined as BMI of more than 25 kg/m²). The numbers climb sharply with age. A study of over 6.4 lakh Indian women found that nearly 49% of those aged 35–49 were overweight or obese. In the 18–30 age group, another study revealed that more than half, 52.4%, were already obese, *writes Daphne Clarence*.



Silver Can Be The New Swag

In 25 years, India will have 300mn elders. It's time for a mental reset - from making second careers possible, to recognising hours of caregiving they provide, to finding ways to keep them socially active. Recently, a parliamentary committee proposed that the age criteria for Ayushman Bharat Vay Vandana Card, the health insurance scheme for elders, be reduced from 70 to 60 years of age, and coverage doubled from 5L to 10L. Whether or not that suggestion is implemented, it points to the importance of the demographic transition in India, *writes Rohini Nilekani*.



Claims, complaints, coverage: India's health insurance story

For the average policyholder, hassles in claim processing are far from rare. According to a recent report by Insurance Samadhan, a tech-based grievance redressal platform, around 88 per cent of complaints by health insurance policyholders are related to claim rejection. The reasons for claim rejection range from policy exclusions and limitations to procedural violations and non-disclosures, *writes Gyanendra Keshri*.



[India's home nurses are overworked, untrained and undervalued: How to bridge the gap in elderly care](#)

India's booming health system has a significant gap due to the absence of trained home nursing assistants to provide non-medical care. The nation's senior citizen population, which was 138 million in 2021, is projected to reach 194 million by 2031, according to the National Statistical Office. Increasingly, the elderly population is living alone in their homes or is forced to care for themselves as eligible caregivers at home are at work, *writes Ani Grace Kalaimathi.*



[The unseen health impact of climate on India's superpower aspirations](#)

As India positions itself as a global superpower, it must address a critical blind spot: the health impacts of climate change and their far-reaching economic consequences. Current assessments of India's economic trajectory often focus on infrastructure, innovation, and geopolitical strategy, while overlooking the growing burden of climate-related health outcomes on India's greatest asset: its human capital, *write Sanjay Rajagopalan and Arnab Ghosh.*



[Mental Health Funding in India: When Economic Surveys and Budget Realities Diverge](#)

Since the last fiscal, mental health has started finding increasing mention in the Economic Survey. The Economic Survey 2024-25, tabled just before the Union Budget for the financial year 2025-26, draws a direct connection between mental well-being and productivity. It mentions that mental well-being of the youth, the most important element of India's demographic dividend, is a critical factor for economic growth, *write Sayali Mahashur and Ramya Pillutla.*



[Lancet study flags adolescent health challenges for 2030: Why diet, anaemia and mental health must be in focus](#)

Poor nutrition, anaemia and mental health will be a challenge for one billion adolescents globally by 2030, according to an analysis by the Lancet Commission. The analysis used data from the 2021 Global Burden of Disease study. New projections suggest that, without political will, policy initiatives and financial investments, adolescents will be exposed to health risks in countries which are already battling multiple disease burdens, *writes Anuradha Mascarenhas.*

[Most drug-resistant infections go untreated in India, study finds](#)

Nearly a million people are dying in India each year from drug-resistant infections, many of which go untreated due to lack of access to the right antibiotics. A new study lays bare the scale of the problem, revealing that in 2019, just 7.8% of people in India received appropriate treatment for life-threatening carbapenem-resistant Gram-



negative (CRGN) bacterial infections. The study, led by researchers from the Global Antibiotic Research & Development Partnership (GARDP) and academic collaborators, is the first to quantify the treatment gap for antimicrobial-resistant infections in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), writes Subhra Priyadarshini.

Resources

[Poorer performance on physical frailty-related parameters is associated with depression among older rural Indians](#)

Depression is a common mental health disorder that contributes substantially to the global disease burden. Depression is widely prevalent among older adults, and its adverse impact on this population is profound, resulting in poor quality of life, disability, and mortality. Nevertheless, it is underdiagnosed and undertreated, resulting in substantial strain on healthcare systems and enormous economic costs. In India, wherein the proportion of older adults is rising rapidly, geriatric depression poses a serious public health challenge. Recent estimates suggest that around one-third of the older Indian population could be suffering from depression, write *Jonas S. Sundarakumar, Pravin Sahadevan, Aishwarya Hiremath, Sakshi Arora & Pooja Rai*.



[A multilevel social network approach to studying multiple disease-prevention behaviors](#)

The effective prevention of many infectious and non-infectious diseases relies on people concurrently adopting multiple prevention behaviors. Individual characteristics, opinion leaders, and social networks have been found to explain why people take up specific prevention behaviors. However, it remains challenging to understand how these factors shape multiple interdependent behaviors. We propose a multilevel social network framework that allows us to study the effects of individual and social factors on multiple disease prevention behaviors simultaneously, write *Vörös, A., Bellotti, E., Nengnong, C.B. et al*.



Featured Partner



Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) is a public private initiative that has collaboratively evolved through consultations with multiple constituencies including Indian and international academia, state and central governments, multi & bi-lateral agencies and civil society groups. PHFI is a response to redress the limited institutional capacity in India for strengthening training, research and policy development in the area of Public Health.



Help us develop a roadmap to achieve universal health coverage in India by visiting our website: <https://www.citizenshealth.in/>

[#ReimaginingIndiasHealth](#) [#HealthcareForAll](#) [#CitizensHealthIndia](#)

We love hearing back from you! Please send your comments, suggestions, and contributions for these newsletters, including research highlights and published features to citizenhealthin@gmail.com

Subscribe to our newsletter



Copyright © 2021 The Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute, Harvard University, All rights reserved. | B- Block, 43, First Floor, Middle Circle, Connaught Place | Delhi, DL 110001 IN

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!