

Edition 55 | May 30, 2026



Dear Friends,

We are delighted to present to you the May edition of the monthly newsletter by [The Lancet Commission on a Citizen-Centred Health System for India](#). This month's newsletter explores how health systems in India are being reshaped by shifting demographics, climate pressures, and changing care needs. It brings together perspectives on population policy, the growing importance of allied healthcare, and the links between child health and learning outcomes, while also highlighting emerging priorities such as elderly care financing, mental health among younger populations, and the need for stronger surveillance of non-communicable diseases. The issue also reflects on India's evolving approach to health innovation, from AI partnerships to climate-responsive care, and features new work on practical health system reforms and food fortification. If you haven't yet explored the Lancet Commission report, we invite you to read it below.

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## News & Opinions



### [Cash for more children: Andhra Pradesh's population policy may exact a heavy price from women](#)

[...] Cash incentives, rather than being a benign policy measure, could have drastic consequences for women's health and well-being, according to Poonam Muttreja, Executive Director of the Population Foundation of India. "That is not even an opinion poll. It is a powerful man standing in front of a crowd and saying, essentially, 'Haan, bolo.' When financial pressure begins shaping reproductive decisions, we must ask whether those decisions are truly free. A woman may begin thinking, 'I need the money, so should I have another child?' That is the danger such announcements create," she said.



### [Learning outcomes and child health are linked](#)

As India observed POSHAN Pakhwada last month, attention was focused on improving nutrition outcomes for women and children. This year's emphasis on early brain development is especially timely. Global evidence suggests that investments in early-childhood development can generate significant economic returns — through higher future earnings, better learning outcomes, and reduced social costs — often exceeding returns from those made later in life. Advances in neuroscience show that early childhood represents a once-in-a-lifetime window, when nutrition, health, stimulation, and responsive caregiving together shape the developing brain, write *Soumya Swaminathan and Drishti Sharma*.



### [Allied healthcare needs attention](#)

When people think about healthcare, they usually think about doctors, hospitals and medicines. Yet the reality of modern healthcare is very different. Every diagnosis, surgery, dialysis session, laboratory test or rehabilitation programme depends on a vast ecosystem of professionals who work behind the scenes. Laboratory technologists, imaging specialists, dialysis technicians, physiotherapists, operation theatre staff and many others translate medical decisions into actual patient care. These professionals collectively known as Allied and Healthcare Professionals (AHPs) form the operational backbone of the health system, writes *Indu Bhushan*.



### [India's future climate resilience will depend on its ability to build a public healthcare system that recognises heat as a highly gendered disaster](#)

[...] The country is no longer confronting climate change as a distant environmental concern. The crisis has become immediate, physical, and deeply unequal. From the plains of North India to the coastal belts of the South, prolonged spells of extreme heat are altering everyday life, impacting labour productivity, straining infrastructure, and increasing public health emergencies. But behind this crisis is a hidden reality that most people don't see: women carry a disproportionate and highly gendered burden of heat stress, write *Preethi Lolaksha Nagaveni, Amit Anand, and Anusreeta Dutta*.



### [IndiaAI-ICMR Partnership Signals India's Push Toward a Sovereign, Responsible Healthcare AI Ecosystem](#)

IndiaAI, flagship initiative of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India (GOI) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) have formalised a strategic collaboration to advance the adoption of responsible artificial intelligence across the country's healthcare and biomedical research ecosystem. The partnership arrives at a crucial moment for India's healthcare sector, where AI adoption is rapidly moving beyond pilot projects and entering mainstream clinical, administrative, and public health workflows, *writes Dr. Asawari Sawant.*



### [Gen Z drives workplace therapy surge as mental health takes centre stage](#)

The approach of Indian employees towards workplace mental health is undergoing a shift, and workers are no longer quietly ignoring counselling benefits tucked away in HR portals. A new report by digital health benefits platform ekinicare shows that mental wellness usage across corporate India has surged 44 per cent since 2023, with younger employees increasingly treating therapy as a normal part of healthcare rather than a last resort, *writes Sarjna Rai.*



### [How NPS Swasthya model may reshape elderly healthcare financing in India](#)

Earlier this year, the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) floated the idea of a health cover scheme that would be carved out of the current pension corpus an employee puts aside to serve as a buffer against medical expenses later in life. The proposed NPS Swasthya Pension Scheme, as it was named and being currently tested as a Proof of Concept (PoC) under the pension architecture, is particularly remarkable because it could do away with the episodic nature of insurance-led healthcare coverage, *writes Subhomoy Bhattacharjee.*



### [India lacks systematic surveillance system for non-communicable diseases](#)

[...] A new review article by the Indian Council of Medical Research - National Institute of NCD Epidemiology (ICMR-NINE) published in International Journal of non-communicable diseases stated that a well-defined policy for institutionalising NCD surveillance with well-defined objectives, standard methods, definitions, risk factors, health conditions and health system response is the need of the hour, *writes Aksheev Thakur.*

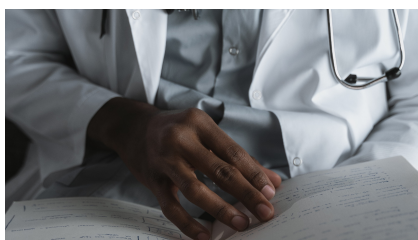
## Resources

[The Citizens Survey 2022-23: a household-](#)



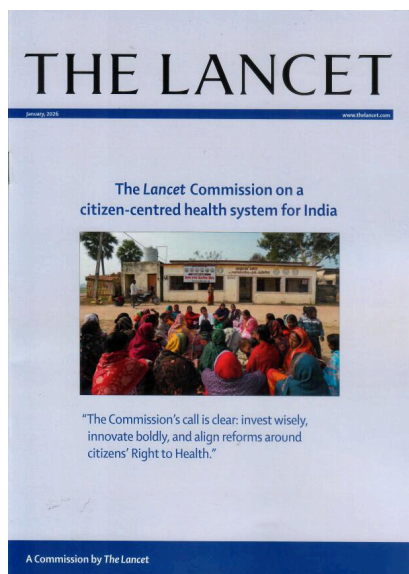
## [Level dataset on Universal Health Coverage in India](#)

The pursuit of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in India is particularly challenging given the country's vast population and pronounced socioeconomic disparities. Although extensive research addresses specific healthcare areas, contemporary data on citizens' healthcare access, quality, and preferences to inform UHC design are lacking. To bridge this gap, the Lancet Commission on a Citizen-Centred Health System for India conducted a Citizens Survey from November 2022 to April 2023, interviewing respondents in person in 50,000 randomly selected households across 125 districts in 29 Indian states and Union Territories, *write Kalita A., Zadey S., Shukla S.K. et al.*



## [Health Reform Manual: Eight Practical Steps](#)

Strengthening health systems to achieve universal health coverage and improved population outcomes requires structured approaches that can navigate technical complexity, political dynamics and implementation challenges. This manual provides practical guidance for designing, implementing and evaluating health system reforms through a systematic, stepwise process grounded in health policy and systems research, *write Reich M. R., Abril Campos P., Kalita A., Guyer A.L. & Yip W.*



## **After 5 years of extensive research, [The Lancet Commission on a Citizen-Centred Health System for India report is here!](#)**

The report proposes a transformative approach to India's health system by placing the needs of citizens front and centre. The report's authors emphasise the urgent need to strengthen India's public healthcare and identify a several health system reforms needed to advance Universal Health Coverage. The Commission advocates for a rights-based, citizen-centred model that promotes community participation, transparency, and equity—key principles of UHC—aimed at ensuring high-quality, affordable care for all.

[Read the Report](#)



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