

SEX DIFFERENTIALS IN MORTALITY AND AVAILABLE MEDICAL FACILITIES IN INDIA

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In developed countries, the females have more chances of surviving right from childhood to old age. But in India, the females suffering from relatively bad mortality condition as compared to males, though the level of mortality for both sexes has declined to a great extent. The possible causes of relatively higher females mortality in India, as often discussed may be the following, (a) neglect of females (b) early marriage and premature cohabitation (c) frequent child bearing associated with unskilled midwifery (d) poor nutrition, housing and sanitary conditions and (e) in-adequate medical facilities.¹

Among these, factors (a) and (b) are mainly dependent on social and cultural behaviour and to bring down the level of female mortality related to these two factors, it would be necessary to have a change in the socio-cultural behaviour. Factors (d) and (e) are mainly dependent on economic ability of the community and to some extent these factors are common for both males and females, so far as mortality is concerned. The factor (c) can be treated as one of the major factors responsible for female mortality in India.

It is generally argued that by providing adequate medical facilities, the female mortality could be brought down to a lower level in India as many developed countries where female mortality rates are lower, also have adequate medical facilities. It is possible to understand from available statistics on mortality that the female mortality is lower in those countries where the general mortality rate is also lower. Thus, it may be conceded in the argument that by providing adequate medical facilities, the general mortality rate would be brought down and then it would perhaps be possible to aim at lower female mortality. But the factors which determine the female mortality in India do not depend on the medical aspect only. Thus it may be useful to examine the sex differentials in mortality with available medical facilities in India so as to understand the extent of medical facilities in influencing female mortality.

To start with, let us have a brief look at the statistics on medical expenditure, doctor-population ratio and bed-population ratio of the countries where the female mortality rates are lower. It can be observed from table I that Government expenditure on health in developed countries is quite high as