

IIT-M calls for greater govt investment in elder-care

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An analysis, based on the 75th round of National Sample Survey 2017–18, found that only 18.9 per cent of the elderly had health insurance, with a vast majority being unable to bear large expenditure on health



An Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT-M) research has called for greater government investment in public healthcare to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the elderly. The current pandemic poses a greater risk of social isolation among the elderly, which may lead to greater adverse health impact.

Overall, given the evidence on the possible hardships that the elderly may have already gone through during the pandemic and hardships that they may face in the future, the importance of strengthening the public health care system cannot be over-emphasised, researchers opined.

Based on the 75th round of the National Sample Survey (NSS) 2017-18, the study, published in the international journal *Globalization and Health*, found that:

- Ø Only 18.9 per cent of the elderly had health insurance and therefore they may not be able to bear large expenditures on health; and
- Ø Further, 27.5 per cent of people whose age is 80 years or above are immobile and 70 per cent of elders are partially or wholly financially dependent on others.

The study was undertaken by Prof. V.R. Muraleedharan, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Madras, and Dr. Alok Ranjan, the first Author who was a Post-Doctoral Student at IIT Madras till December 2020 and is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at IIT Jodhpur.

The NSS survey covered 113,823 households and 555,115 individuals from randomly selected 8077 villages and 6181 urban areas. The results showed that disparities exist in health status as well as healthcare access of elderly people across the country.

The researchers want to extend the result of this study to a policy. They plan to carry out detailed surveys among the elderly population particularly in Tamil Nadu, especially to design effective rehabilitative care which is almost absent in India's public healthcare system. The research group works closely with the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu. They hope that their studies will be positively received by the state government.