



## A STUDY OF HEALTH INSURANCE AGENTS IN WESTERN VIDARBHA REGION FACED VARIOUS TYPES OF PROBLEMS SUCH AS UNAWARENESS OF CUSTOMERS REGARDING HEALTH INSURANCE

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### ABSTRACT:

The Indian healthcare industry has grown manifold during the last few years, though there is still a wide shortfall in terms of availability of doctors per 1000 patients, quality medical care and number of beds per thousand people. The assessment by various agencies is that to meet the minimum international standards, there is a need to double the capacity of hospitals, which calls for large scale investments.

The data obtained from the respondents was analyzed and arranged in appropriate Tables the tables were described and figures were drawn on the basis of information present in the Tables. The results of analysis were presented at the end of description of each Table.



**KEYWORDS :** Indian healthcare industry , quality medical care.

### INTRODUCTION:

India's insurance market has grown rapidly over the past six years, with new business premiums growing at over 40 per cent per year. This impressive growth has been driven by liberalization of the sector that enabled the entry of a host of new players with significant growth aspirations and capital commitments. These players have contributed to the sector's development by significantly enhancing

product awareness, promoting consumer education and information, and creating more organized distribution channels.

In urban areas, penetration of insurance in the mass market is about 65 per cent, and it is considerably less in the low-income unbanked segment. In rural areas, insurance penetration in the unbanked segment is estimated to be about 40 per cent, while it is marginal at best in the unbanked segment. This will change as India sees strongly accelerating household income and a

more favourable demographic profile over the next two decades. This will accelerate insurance penetration and per capita coverage.

### INDIAN HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

In spite of the great achievements and progress India has made post-independence, when measured by international standards, it is way behind developed countries in many aspects, especially in matters that have direct bearing on health and well-being of the citizens.

Based on the thinking 'health is wealth', and lack of health leads to loss of production and productivity, India has placed lot of importance on healthcare after

Independence. Indian health care programmes were designed based on two fundamental principles:

- 1) State responsibility for health care and
- 2) Post independence, free medical care for all.

But, resultant to the financial crisis faced by the governments at the centre and states, and in its efforts to contain deficit by controlling government spending, post liberalization, there has been an abrupt switch to market based governance styles and much influential advocacy to reduce the state role in health. People have therefore been forced to switch between weak and inefficient public services and expensive private provision or at the limit forego care entirely except in life threatening situations, in such cases sliding into indebtedness. This brings forward, the need to provide quality health care at controlled cost to the lower sections and to the middle class of the society. Over the years, the life expectancy in India has been going up and this has resulted in an increase in the population of the elderly needing geriatric care. The size of India's elderly population aged 60 and above is expected to increase from 77 million in 2001 to 179 million in 2031 and further to 301 million in 2051.

Several initiatives by the government post-independence have succeeded in controlling a number of life threatening diseases and eradicating many. Classic example is small pox which had taken several lives a few decades back. Leprosy, tuberculosis etc have been brought under control. But another menace has emerged. The incidence of heart problems, cancer, type II diabetes, obesity issues, hyper tension and cholesterol related health problems etc. are on the rise. Being diseases associated with the way a person or group of people lives; these are generally called life style diseases. This is compounded by work/family related stress and poor food habits. Lack of physical exercise is another factor contributing to the increase in these non-contagious type problems. They have long term consequences on the health of a person and therefore are of critical importance to the health insurance providers.

**Table 1: Information regarding problems faced by health insurance agents**

<b>Problem Faced by Agents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Unawareness of customers regarding health insurance	156	78.0
More efforts are required to convince customers about plan	33	16.5
Health care reforms	40	20.0
Burden of maintaining balance between sales and relationship	16	8.0
Lack of demand	57	28.5
Diverse communication and marketing channel	3	1.5

Above **Table 1** illustrates information pertaining to the problem faced by agents in health insurance sector. It is evident from the information that 78% agents faced problem of unawareness of customers regarding health insurance, whereas 28.5% agents faced problem of lack of demand of health insurance in addition to this problems such as health care reforms, requirement of more efforts in convincing customers about plan, burden of maintaining balance between sales and relationship as well as diverse communication and marketing channel was faced by 20%, 16.5%, 8% and 1.5% agents. Thus it is apparent from the information that majority of agents working in health insurance sector faced problem of unawareness of customers regarding health insurance.

**Table 2: Information regarding problems faced by agents while delivering effective services to customers**

Problems in delivering effective services	Frequency	Percent	Z	P
Yes	164	82.0	12.800	<0.05
No	36	18.0		
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>		

Above **Table 2** illustrates responses of health insurance agents about facing problems in delivering effective services to the customers. It observed that 82% agents faced problems while delivering effective services to customers, whereas 18% agents did not face problem while delivering effective services to the customers. Hence it is evident from the study results that significantly ( $P < 0.05$ ) high percentage of health insurance agents in Western Vidarbha faced problems while delivering effective services to customers.

**Table 3: Information pertaining to the reasons for facing problem while delivering effective services to the customer**

Reasons for facing problem	Frequency	Percent
Official Delay	79	48.2
Communication Problem	54	32.9
Technical Error	25	15.2
Others	3	1.8
Official Delay & Communication Problem	3	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Above **Table 3** demonstrates information pertaining to the reasons for facing problem while delivering effective services to the customer. It is evident from the information that 48.2% agents faced problem of official delay, whereas 32.9% agents faced communication problem while delivering effective services to the customers. In addition to this problem such as technical error was faced by 15.2% agents while delivering effective services to the customers. Thus it is apparent from the study result that majority of health insurance agents faced problem of official delay while delivering effective services to customers.

## CONCLUSION

It is apparent from the study results that health insurance agents in Western Vidarbha Region faced various types of problems such as Unawareness of customers regarding health insurance more efforts are required to convince customers about plan, health care reforms, burden of maintaining balance between sales and relationship, lack of demand and diverse communication and marketing channel (Table 1). In addition to this significantly ( $P < 0.05$ ) high percentage of health insurance agents faced problems while delivering effective services to customers (Table 2), these include problems such as official delay, communication problem and technical error (Table 3). These results showed that agents face numerous problems with respect to sales of health insurance products in western Vidarbha region.

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