

Empowering Women's Health: A Gateway to Global Prosperity



A recent analysis conducted jointly by the World Economic Forum and the McKinsey Health Institute underscores the substantial potential of improving women's health to bolster GDP. Not only does enhancing women's health yield benefits for individual women, but it also positively impacts families, communities, organizations, and the global economy as a whole. Recognising the significance of addressing the gender health gap, the World Economic Forum is launching the Global Alliance for Women's Health. This initiative aims to reduce the women's health gap, thereby enhancing lives and potentially unlocking an annual GDP opportunity of \$1 trillion by 2040, according to the aforementioned analysis. Together, these efforts illuminate promising avenues for effecting meaningful global change.

Harnessing the Economic Power of Women's Health

While it's a common notion that women tend to live longer than men, this narrative oversimplifies the reality. Indeed, women may live longer, but they also endure 25% more of their lives in poor health, grappling with a higher prevalence of debilitating conditions such as rheumatoid or osteoarthritis, atrial fibrillation, or endometriosis. Annually, the women's health gap translates to a loss of 75 million years of life due to poor health or premature death. However, this toll isn't isolated; rather, it reverberates through every facet of society and the economy. Hence, enhancing women's health doesn't just benefit individuals; it also fosters positive outcomes for families, communities, organisations, and the global economy at large. Consequently, the World Economic Forum and the McKinsey Health Institute embarked on a collaborative study to delve into the root causes of the women's health gap and explore strategies for narrowing it.

Unveiling the Reality of Women's Health Disparities

A notable revelation from the analysis is that only a small fraction (5%) of the women's health burden comprises conditions exclusive to females, such as gynaecological diseases and maternal, newborn, and child health. The vast majority (95%) of this burden stems from conditions affecting both men and women. More than half of this burden arises from health conditions that are either more prevalent in women or manifest differently in them. However, there remains a notable lack of understanding regarding these sex-based differences, primarily due to historical biases in medical research, which predominantly focused on the male body. This oversight has led to many treatments being less effective for women than men, with approximately 65% of interventions showing sex-related discrepancies in effectiveness.

Overcoming Barriers to Equitable Healthcare Access

Moreover, women encounter greater barriers to healthcare access, experience diagnostic delays, and often receive suboptimal treatment. They also face higher out-of-pocket expenses and encounter stigma and bias within healthcare systems primarily designed and managed by men. Consequently, women are less likely to receive equal interventions for a given disease compared to men. Addressing issues of affordability and access could mitigate rising healthcare costs while improving outcomes for patients and insurance providers alike. Value-Based Care models, which emphasize a holistic and patient-centric approach, hold promise in this regard, particularly for conditions like endometriosis that require extensive diagnostic processes.

Bridging Data Gaps to Prioritise Women's Health

Furthermore, there has been disproportionately low investment in women's health conditions relative to their prevalence, perpetuating a cycle of limited scientific understanding and data availability. This gap extends to the digital healthcare space, where FemTech companies receive only a fraction of total funding. Moreover, the systematic underestimation of women's health burdens due to insufficient data disaggregation underscores the need for improved measurement techniques and comprehensive data collection efforts.

Addressing the gender health gap is not only a matter of equity but also an economic imperative. By prioritizing women's health and closing existing gaps in care and research, we can unlock significant potential for societal and economic advancement. Through collaborative efforts

such as the Global Alliance for Women's Health, we can work towards a future where every individual has equal access to quality healthcare and opportunities for well-being.

Source: [World Economic Forum](#)

Image Credit: [iStock](#)

Published on : Tue, 13 Feb 2024