

Sitting on crucial data, BMC wasting opportunity to improve citizen health?

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There is no centralised data or record of the number of patients at civic dispensaries. The BMC in response to a RTI query filed by this correspondent asked the applicant to visit individual ward offices to get the data. This despite the civic body having an advanced information technology department and spending crores to get necessary equipment. The data, if available, would also prove to be a key to holistic citywide planning, analysis, cure and prevention.



The response to the Right to Information query, wherein mid-day sought data on asthma, lung-related, or respiratory illness patients treated in civic dispensaries, further revealed that the data is scattered at ward-level.

Speaking on this, a civic official said, “Case paper system is prevalent here, and it is not possible to keep data of illnesses. Major trending diseases like monsoon-related or notified ones such as TB and diabetes are earmarked, but not all of them.” The civic body also has indicative centralised data on births and deaths. [BMC](#) Executive Health officer Dr Mangala Gomare did not respond to calls and messages.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has spent crores of rupees on upgrading its IT infra and also started its ambitious health card project, which is aimed at centralising patient data from across the city, but there has been no change on the ground. As per latest statistics, BMC has spent more than Rs 400 crore of public money on IT infrastructure upgrade with an additional provision of Rs 78.76 crore for this financial year.

Former officials say

Former director of Maharashtra Health Services Dr Subhash Salunkhe expressed surprise and said, “Data plays a very important role in health system planning. The BMC has done a good job during the pandemic in data collection and storage. I don’t know why they don’t keep centralised data of regular patients which can help them with elaborate planning.”

Dr Sanjiv Kamble, another former director of Maharashtra Health Services, said, “Data is useless if not centralised. I can’t comment about BMC, but with the data in hand, anyone can make an immediate city-wide action plan. If there is a rise in a certain category of illnesses in certain wards, the trends are quickly visible and immediate preventive action could be initiated. If the data is available, it can be analysed daily, weekly or on-need basis to make an action plan.”

Views of NGOs, activist

A recent study by two city-based non-profits Mumbai First and Praja Foundation stressed on the issue and stated in its latest report titled ‘Ideal Mumbai Public Health Manifesto’ that a real-time data system for the cause of deaths and prevalent diseases in the city is much required. The report added that the BMC has a statistics team that must be given the job to regularly upload relevant data

on the top 10 causes of death and primary healthcare facilities so that it can provide information to citizens.

“Duplication of data through various agencies within the BMC (such as TB cell, EPID cell, ward wise Medical Officer of Health, etc.) needs to be streamlined to ensure that uniform data for a particular disease is made available across agencies. Additionally, with the help of data, the local government can track the status of health according to these targets and ensure corrective interventions are carried out,” the report added.

Dr Neville A Mehta, CEO of Mumbai First who was instrumental in making the report, said, “The BMC doesn’t keep centralised data. Data can be used for planning purposes. If BMC has centralised data they can understand the trend of illness of each ward and make plans accordingly.”

“This is a serious matter and the BMC is irresponsible for giving such an answer to an RTI query,” said RTI activist Anil Galgali, adding, “This is like avoiding information. They want applicants to visit 24 wards and get the information. BMC is the biggest and richest corporation in the country but they are indirectly claiming they don’t have centralised data. This is unbelievable.”

Link : <https://www.msn.com/en-in/health/wellness/sitting-on-crucial-data-bmc-wasting-opportunity-to-improve-citizen-health/ar-AAZt2e2?cvid=10615290e2124b29a4f86bff8bdc0454#image=1>