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| **Use of Information Technology (IT) for reaching the unreached in a urban slum of Chandigarh in India** |
| **Background/Objectives**In-spite of availability, the access to health services remains poor in urban slums. Hence, information technology (IT) was developed to deliver short message service (SMS) to reach out to the community under Integrated Health Information System (IHIS) developed in one of the health centers in Chandigarh, India. . This study was carried out to determine the extent of use of health information sent through SMS and examines the perception of health staff regarding use of IT in health.**Methods**A cross sectional study was carried out in an urban slum of Chandigarh in India having about 25000 population. Based on the records from an IT-enabled health centre, it was found that SMSs had been sent to 917 people in last two months. A pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire was used to interview 720 persons, who were available during survey period. In-depth interviews were conducted with the health staff using the Integrated Health Message Service in the health center. STATA 14 was used for statistical analysis. **Results**Mean age of study participants was 34.07±0.47 years; 79.4% were women and 78.1% were homemakers. More than 80% belonged to scheduled caste. About 70% had registered their own mobile numbers at the health centre while 30% had registered the mobile numbers of their family members. Mobile use was higher among men (p=0.002). Sixty three percent of the participants reported the receipt of SMS. One-third had received SMS more than once in a month. Mobile users reported significantly higher frequency of receiving SMS than those where messages were received on mobile of other family members (p<0.01).Only 38% had read the messages themselves, and 70% of the participants could remember the content of the message. SMS were useful as reminders for medication adherence. The willingness to receive SMS was not significantly different among mobile users and non-users. People above the age of 30 years and women were in favour of audio messages. Medical Officers, Auxiliary Nurse Midwives found IHIS useful. **Discussion**With the increasing use of mobile phones in the urban areas and as has been reported in this study in slums, SMSs can be an effective tool to improve outreach for health promotion. The usage of other electronic media such as IVRS can be explored for reaching out not only to urban rich but also to the migrant slum population. **Key Words**mHealth, eHealth, Information Technology, Health Promotion, Urban Slum, Short Message Service. |