



Jaipur: A rapid assessment study celebrating the free medicine scheme conducted by district collectors and Chief Medical Health Officers renders a chilling reminder of the continuing mindsets towards the girl child in the state. The study shows that there has been a two to three-fold increase in the treatment of girl children (0-6 years of age), in the six months that the scheme came into being (Oct 2012-Mar 2013) compared to the pre-free medicine scenario (Mar 2012-Sept 2012).

Money wise

The district, which has shown the highest rise in the number of girl children availing free medicines is Jhalawar. According to officials, the number of girls coming in as patients has tripled in the district. Before the scheme was introduced, the number of girl children who took the treatment was 4469, which increased to 12,883, doctors said.

In Barmer there has been an increase of 90 to 100 percent. Before the scheme was initiated, 31,640 girls registered for treatment. Their numbers rose to 62,763 after the scheme's implementation.

In simple terms, now that the medicines are 'free', people are finally flocking to hospitals to avail treatment for their girl children, implying they were not being treated whenever it implied a financial cost.

Rajasthan Medical Services Corporation (RMSC) MD Samit Sharma said, "After the scheme has been launched, a two to three fold increase in girl children coming for treatment has been witnessed. Now, people are taking their girl children to hospitals for treatment in large numbers," he added. Sharma said that it is for the first time in the last 65 years there is access to health services as people can get free medicines. Now free medical tests will definitely help in the increase of girl child ratio in the state, he stated.

Dr Hemant Acharaya of Save the Child organisation said, "With the government initiative of free medicine, free medical tests and schemes like Shubh Laxmi Yojna, people are now willing to bring their girl child for medical attention, which will be a boon to save the female child." In the state, people are gender biased giving priority only to the male child. People do not spend on girl child education, health and food nutrition, which has reflected in a declining female sex ratio.

The free medicine scheme was started in October 2012 and until now around 10 crore people have benefited from it. Last year alone, 7.63 crore people availed of scheme.

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