

# INDIA: STATUS OF SELF-CARE

## The Value of Self-Care

Embedding self-care practices into the health care continuum has the potential to improve health and quality of life while simultaneously supporting health system sustainability. Self-care practices empower individuals by providing them with the information and tools to make decisions about their own health and care. An increased ownership for the own health promotes, at systems level, the efficient use of limited healthcare resources and relieves the burden on healthcare providers - saving 1.8 billion physician hours to attend to more severe health conditions. A related impact of this is the increased focus on improving disease prevention efforts by empowering individuals to address minor ailments at home.

At the global level, current self-care activities are generating substantial monetary savings as well as healthcare workforce savings, totalling at least approximately \$119 billion per year. The above should be coupled with a positive impact on global productivity when over-the-counter treatment is adopted at first, granting approximately 40.8 billion productive days, corresponding to a value of \$1,879 billion in welfare effects. Looking at the future, the cost saving effect is estimated to be approximately \$178.8 billion per annum, with increased productivity gains of 71.9 billion productive days per annum. If we add other positive effects brought by other self-care practices, such as use of preventive care, oral health care and use of vitamins and mineral supplements, the overall gain will increase further.

**There are more proven self-care products and practices available to populations today than ever before**, and it is within our collective power to unleash the benefits of truly self-care enabled health systems around the world, if only we set

up adequate policy frameworks that embed self-care seamlessly into the care continuum. Self-care belongs to individuals, families, communities, health care professionals, and policymakers at different levels and with different responsibilities. However, it is a primary responsibility of policymaker to design the enabling environment for each of the stakeholders to fulfill these responsibilities.

**A deeper international focus on self-care, brought up by a WHO Resolution on Self-Care could help foster the necessary momentum to fully integrate it into health systems for the benefit of individuals and society. This should include a definition of self-care and its enablers, and the self-care interventions countries can undertake according to the WHO Guideline on self-care interventions for health and well-being.[1]**

The value of OTC research in India demonstrated that 27 minor ailments accounted for a staggering 4.52% billion USD annual healthcare spends and that massive savings of up to 43% can be incurred through 12 ailments, in which more than 25% of sufferers adopted self-medication. Over 12 billion days in productivity are currently saved and more than 6.5 million QALYs (quality adjusted life year) are gained.

Additionally, through the 12 billion productive days gained through self-care practices currently, almost \$90 billion in welfare gains are produced. Over \$1 billion is generated through the cost containment resulting from individual self-care practices, as well as over 800 million individual hours and 40 million physician hours.

South Asia is the region that would benefit the most from self-care policies, especially when it comes to quality of life.

## SELF-CARE POLICY BRIEF

Moreover, the same study found that implementing self-care policies could generate in \$2 billion in cost containment by 2030. Significant increases of productivity to about 23 billion days and welfare to \$166 billion could also be expected. Furthermore, because of avoided travel time over long distances and long waiting times for physician visits in this region, more than one and a half billion hours in individual time savings could be generated in the future. Approximately 82 million in saved physician time could be gained [2].

A report by the Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI) highlighted the economic value that increased focus on self-care concepts, such as self-medication, can deliver. A reported 3.85 million USD are spent on health care providers for minor ailments each year; appropriate use of self-care could result in savings of up to 43%. [3]

### India: Overview

Overall, Indian medical guidelines contain many self-care elements. For example, the Indian guidelines for managing type 2 diabetes are cited as key concepts for the empowerment of diabetic patients. These guidelines include a short section about diabetes education in which self-care skills, appropriate resources for self-care, and self-monitoring skills. [4] The Self-Care Readiness Index 2022, which covers India, found that Indian healthcare providers scored the highest on the statement “health outcomes improve when patients are empowered with an at-home care plan for managing chronic conditions”. [5] A report by OPPI shows minimal role of pharmacist in the care journey to date. [6]

Health promotion and preventive healthcare have been at the forefront of the health policy agenda since the 2017 launch the National Health Policy. [7] *Swasth Nagrik Abhiyan*, a social movement for health, recommends setting achievable and measurable targets for each area, and places heavy emphasis on preventative and promotive care at multiple levels, including childhood, to combat a variety of communicable and non-communicable diseases. *Ayushman Bharat* (Health and Wellness Centers (AB-HWCs)), AYUSH systems and ASHAs (Accredited Social Health Activists) also promote healthy living and prevention strategies. [7] [8] [9]

In May 2022, the government proposed an OTC list with 16 medicines, a list set to grow in the coming years. [10] Finally, the Ministry is currently developing an OTC Policy Framework, which will help solidify the self-care system in India and empower individuals to proactively and responsibly manage their self-care as a first line of treatment for minor ailments.



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**PHYSICIAN HOURS TO BE  
SAVED THROUGH  
IMPLEMENTATION OF SELF-  
CARE PRACTICES**

**USD\$ 90 B**

**IN WELFARE GAINS  
PRODUCED THROUGH  
CURRENT SELF-CARE  
PRACTICES**

## Recommendations

- Ensure individual empowerment through increased awareness and responsibility towards responsible self-care, through digital and self-care literacy.
- Enhance the use of communication technologies to provide credible information about health and self-care in particular.
- Provide healthcare providers with the tools and frameworks to implement self-care in their daily practice, including pharmacists.
- Regulatory convergence and simplification of low-risk molecules for OTC products and food supplements, in particular establishing Rx-to-OTC switching guidelines.

### End Notes

1 WHO Guidelines on self-care interventions for health and well-being. World Health Organization, 2022. Available at: <https://app.magicapp.org/#/guideline/Lr21gL>

2 Self-Care Socio-Economic Research: The Global Social and Economic Value of Self-Care. Global Self Care Federation, 2022. Available at: [https://www.selfcarefederation.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2022-06/FINAL\\_GSCF%20Socio-Economic%20Research%20Report%2022062022.pdf](https://www.selfcarefederation.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2022-06/FINAL_GSCF%20Socio-Economic%20Research%20Report%2022062022.pdf)

3 Value of OTC in India. Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India. 2021. Available at: <https://www.indiaoppi.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Value-of-OTC-in-India-1.pdf>

4 ICMR Guidelines for Management of Type 2 Diabetes. Indian Council of Medical Research. 2018. Available at: [https://main.icmr.nic.in/sites/default/files/guidelines/ICMR\\_GuidelinesType2diabetes2018\\_0.pdf](https://main.icmr.nic.in/sites/default/files/guidelines/ICMR_GuidelinesType2diabetes2018_0.pdf)

5 Self-Care Readiness Index 2022. Global Self-Care Federation. October 2022. Available at:

6 Value of OTC in India. Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India. 2021. Available at: <https://www.indiaoppi.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Value-of-OTC-in-India-1.pdf>

7 Ibid.,

8 Ibid.

9 About Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA). National Health Mission. Available at: <https://nhm.gov.in/index1.php?lang=1&level=1&sublinkid=150&lid=226>

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13 Guidelines for Management of Type 1 Diabetes. ICMR. 2022. Available at: [https://main.icmr.nic.in/sites/default/files/upload\\_documents/ICMR\\_Guidelines\\_for\\_Management\\_of\\_Type\\_1\\_Diabetes.pdf](https://main.icmr.nic.in/sites/default/files/upload_documents/ICMR_Guidelines_for_Management_of_Type_1_Diabetes.pdf)

14 Seth, S., Singh, S., et al. Heart failure guidelines for India: Update 2017. Journal of the Practice of Cardiovascular Sciences. Available at: <https://www.jpcs.org/article.asp?issn=2395-5414;year=2017;volume=3;issue=3;spage=133;epage=138;aulast=Seth>



Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India