

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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The work undertaken by the author in the field of Medical Geography entitled "Geographical Analysis of Diseases and Health Care Facilities in Urban Areas of Kolhapur District" mainly explains the relationship between the environmental factors and the spatio-temporal distribution of nine diseases in ten urban centres of Kolhapur district.

While studying the environment and its effect on the distribution of diseases in urban centres of Kolhapur district, it is found that lower death rate is prevalent in the hill cities like Panhala and Malkapur, while the cities located in the river basin areas like Kolhapur, Ichalkaranji, Kagal and Gadhinglaj show high death rate. It is true that high altitude areas show less incidence of death, while plain and lowland areas show more prevalence of death. Water-borne diseases like dysentery-diarrhoea are more prevalent in rainy months (from June to September), while there are less deaths by water-borne diseases in non-rainy season. It has also been observed that in the urban areas of Kolhapur district, the death in the old age-group are more than that of the working-age group and show an increasing trend. It is also noticed that 5-9 year age-group of male and female population is most safe in almost all the cities of the district. The disease-wise and city-wise ranking techniques reflect that tuberculosis, dysentery-diarrhoea, cancer and pneumonia are more prevalent in the

cities. Tuberculosis⁶ ranked almost first in the order of importance in cities, followed by dysentery-diarrhoea, cancer and pneumonia.

The study of spatial pattern of infant mortality in the urban areas of Kolhapur district shows a⁷ declining trend within the 20 years period. The high infant mortality rate is associated with poverty⁸, insanitary conditions, high fertility and high general mortality rates. Wrong⁹ beliefs, customs, traditions and taboos take a heavy toll of infants and children, inspite of the improved medical facilities in the urban areas. The overall percentage of infant death shows successive decrease. The highest percentage of infant deaths is noted in Kolhapur city and this percentage gradually increases during the study period. The study also shows that nearly half of the infant deaths¹⁰ take place during rainy months. A water-borne disease like dysentery-diarrhoea are more frequent during the rainy season, due to which infant mortality rate is higher. In this district, nearly 44% of the infant deaths occur during the neo-natal age-group. The reason behind this high neo-natal¹⁰ mortality rate is associated with income of parents, education and literacy level. The specialized paediatric clinics need to be added in more quantity in urban areas.

The study of the spatial pattern of diseases in cities has¹¹ provided a direct relationship between altered environment and the spread of selected diseases.

Overcrowding, urban pollution due to rapid industrialization, improper sanitary provisions, are the predisposing factors for the spread of tuberculosis, cancer and pneumonia in the major cities like Kolhapur, Ichalkaranji and Jaysingpur. It is observed that Kolhapur and Ichalkaranji cities show higher mortality rates as compared to other urban centres. Water-borne and respiratory diseases show more prevalence in urban areas. Diseases like dysentery-diarrhoea, pneumonia and cancer show increasing trend. These diseases rank in the higher order while diseases like leprosy, tetanus and cholera show a declining mortality trend. Rapid industrialization of Kolhapur and Ichalkaranji cities has resulted in more atmospheric pollution. Because of which, diseases of environmental disorders are reported in more quantity. Unsafe and contaminated tap water supply to the cities located in low lying areas show more prevalence of diseases like dysentery-diarrhoea. Hilly cities like Panhala and Malkapur have low death rates because of less urbanization and industrialization.

The study of health care facilities in urban areas reveals that medical facilities are more concentrated in the cities as compared to the villages. All the ten cities show surplus medical services than their requirements. The cities also get the facilities of specialized medical services.

The overall study shows that the cities are fastly developing in their industrial sector and hence, the disease

like cancer, tuberculosis and pneumonia are increasing. Health planners must pay more attention in controlling these diseases. The supply of safe and uncontaminated tap water can control dysentery-diarrhoea. Special attention should be paid in controlling the higher infant mortality rate in the cities. While studying the present medical facilities of the urban areas, it can be clearly stated that the cities enjoy more medical facilities than their requirements and hence, in future, new medical services may be established not in urban areas but in the villages. Controlling tuberculosis, pneumonia and cancer through systematic efforts in the cities and providing more medical services in rural areas may solve much of the health problems of Kolhapur district.

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