

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1083
ANSWERED ON:01.03.2006
ASCERTAINING CAUSES OF DEATHS
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Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether out of 95 lakh deaths every year in the country, the actual cause of death is not known in 75 per cent cases;
- (b) if so, whether the Government is contemplating to conduct a survey and put in place a mechanism in this regard;
- (c) if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether the Government is also contemplating to constitute a special task force for the purpose; and
- (e) if so, the present status thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE (SMT. PANABAKA LAKSHMI)

(a) to (e) Medical Certification of Cause of Death (MCCD) under the civil registration has got statutory backing under the section 10(2) and 10(3) of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969. As per the provision the State Governments are required to notify the hospitals/areas under the Act, wherein cause of each death occurring in hospitals is to be recorded by medical professionals. The scheme has been notified, so far, in 27 States/UTs. The scheme is mainly confined to selected hospitals, generally in urban areas. The proportion of registered deaths under the Act is less than 50 percent. The percentage of medically certified deaths to total registered deaths during 1999 was found to be 15.4% as compared to 14.9% in the year 1998 whereas the percentage of medically certified deaths to urban registered deaths was 41.3% in 1999. The low percentage of medically certified deaths is mainly due to non-issuance of notification by some of the State Governments, non-availability of adequate infrastructure and manpower to exercise the control over the receipt of returns from the notified hospitals.

Since the scheme covers mostly those deaths, which occurred in the selected medical institutions, generally located in urban areas as such compilation of all India or State level estimates on causes of death is not feasible.

2. In order to fill up the data gaps on causes of death, the Government of India has introduced Verbal Autopsy (VA) approach as an integral component of the Sample Registration System (SRS), covering all States/UTs both in rural and urban areas since 2004. Verbal autopsy is an investigation of chain of events, circumstances, symptoms and signs of illness leading to death through an interview of close relatives or associates of the deceased. Based on the data on causes of death from SRS, periodic reports would be made available on regular basis by pooling the sample deaths for three years. Further more in order to develop bench-mark data on cause specific mortality by age and sex, a Special Survey of Death (SSD) has been conducted in all States/UTs by pooling the deaths in Sample Registrations System (SRS) for the period 2001-03. The fieldwork has already been completed and double assignment of cause of death by two independent physicians is in progress. The First report on causes of death based on above survey is expected to be brought out during 2006 by Office of Registrar General, India.