

Short Communication

Reduction in Life Expectancy among Telangana Doctors

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Abstract

Background : Doctors are generally expected to have lower morbidity and mortality rates than the general population due to their medical expertise on living a healthy lifestyle. However, research suggested otherwise. The current study data included 4,481 Health Care Professionals, out of which 395 were deceased doctors and 4,086 were living doctors during the same period. While most doctor-deaths occurred after the age of 60, a few were recorded in younger age groups. Male doctors exhibited significantly higher mortality rates than their female counterparts, although the reduction in life expectancy was comparable across genders. When compared to the general population using Telangana census data, doctors were found to have a notably shorter lifespan. These findings highlight the urgent need for targeted health interventions and wellness programs for medical professionals.

Key words : Telangana, Life expectancy, Doctors, Mortality, Early Deaths.

It is assumed that Health Care Professionals (HCPs), particularly doctors, are often expected to live longer in comparison to the general population due to their extensive medical knowledge and adherence to healthier lifestyles¹. However, recent research studies have suggested otherwise, with doctors in some Indian states dying notably younger than the general population^{2,3}. In India, where the doctor-to-population ratio stands at 1:1800, the loss of even a single doctor adds significant strain to an already burdened system⁴. This study involves the mortality of doctors in Telangana, analyzing deaths by age and gender and comparing them with the general population to assess the reduction in their life expectancy.

Methodology :

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) in Telangana has registered 4,481 life members, between March 2019 and March 2025 under IMA Family Security Scheme (FSS). Present study compiled relevant data of 395 deceased doctors and 4,086 living members from IMA FSS register (Table 1). The general population data for age at death in 5-year intervals and life expectancy in men and women, was taken from the life tables of 2016-20 years of Telangana⁵, published by the Government of India. Descriptive statistics were used, Chi-square tests of difference between frequencies and Student's t-test for differences in means, with a p-value <0.001 considered as statistically significant.

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Received on : 24/04/2025

Accepted on : 17/05/2025

Editor's Comment :

- Behind the white coat lies a silent health crisis. Telangana doctors are losing valuable years of life, likely driven by stress, delayed self-care, and demanding work environments.
- Protecting those who heal others must become a public health priority - through proactive wellness programs, routine screenings, and a culture that encourages doctors to care for themselves too.

Results and Discussion :

Among the 395 deceased doctors (aged 35-85 years), 351 were men and 44 were women (Table 2). The highest number of deaths occurred among male doctors aged 65-70 years (n=74). A few deaths were also noted in younger age groups: 3 doctors died between 35-40 and 2 between 40-45 years. The greatest reduction in life expectancy of 38.80 years was seen in the 35-40 age group (Fig 1). The average reduction across all doctors was 14.39 years (± 6.60). Among men, life expectancy was reduced by an average of 13.66 years (± 6.21), with a maximum of 38 years. For women, the average reduction was higher at 17.14 years (± 8.28), with a maximum of 40 years in two individuals.

Doctors often prioritize patient care over their own health, leading to chronic stress, poor self-care, and missed health screenings⁶. While most deaths occurred among older HCPs, significant losses were also recorded in younger age groups⁷. Many doctors delay or skip routine check-ups, leading to undiagnosed conditions like diabetes, hypertension and hyperlipidemia. A study by the Indian Medical Association (IMA) in Kerala found that 27% of its members died from heart disease, while 25% died from cancer. Suicide also ranked high particularly among those who self-diagnose or use unhealthy coping strategies. This study found higher mortality may be linked to stress-related behaviors such as smoking, alcohol use, or excessive consumption of stimulants⁶. Compared with the general population in Telangana, doctors showed a significant reduction in their life expectancy.

Conclusion :

Doctors in Telangana experience significantly shorter life

How to cite this article : Reduction in Life Expectancy among Telangana Doctors. Danapuneni SR, Kantam T, Paturi VR, Gutta S, Chaparala S, Duvvuru DR. *J Indian Med Assoc* 2026; **124(2)**: 72-3.

Table1 — Study Population, Telangana Doctors

Age years at study / death	Living, N=4086				Demised, N=395			
	Men	%	Women	%	Men	%	Women	%
25-30	4	0.13	3	0.33	0	-	0	-
30-35	29	0.91	14	1.54	0	-	0	-
35-40	88	2.77	55	6.04	1	0.28	2	4.55
40-45	170	5.35	79	8.67	2	0.57	0	-
45-50	223	7.02	83	9.11	10	2.85	1	2.27
50-55	294	9.26	141	15.48	18	5.13	6	13.64
55-60	326	10.27	156	17.12	35	9.97	3	6.82
60-65	464	14.61	113	12.40	43	12.25	8	18.18
65-70	530	16.69	115	12.62	66	18.80	8	18.18
70-75	492	15.50	72	7.90	58	16.52	3	6.82
75-80	303	9.54	54	5.93	60	17.09	9	20.45
80-85	173	5.45	23	2.52	42	11.97	3	6.82
85+	79	2.49	3	0.33	16	4.56	1	2.27
All	3175	100	911	100	351	100	44	100

Table 2 — Reduction in life expectancy

Age at death, years	Reduction in life expectation, years		
	All	Men	Women
35-40	38.80	37.50	40.10
40-45	34.20	33.10	-
45-50	29.90	28.90	31.00
50-55	25.80	24.90	26.70
55-60	21.70	21.10	22.40
60-65	17.90	17.40	18.40
65-70	14.50	14.20	14.90
70-75	11.30	11.10	11.70
75-80	9.00	8.60	9.40
80-85	7.20	6.80	7.70
85+	5.70	5.20	6.20
All	395	351	44
Mean	14.39	13.66	17.14
SD	6.60	6.21	8.28

SD = Standard Deviation

Chi-2, p<0.001 (men versus women, 50-85 years age)

expectancy than the general population, presumably due to work-related stress, delayed medical care and unhealthy coping mechanisms. These findings highlight the urgent need for doctor-wellness initiatives, regular health screenings, and systemic support to reduce occupational burnout and improve health outcomes among HCPs.

Funding : No funding sources.

Conflict of interest : None declared.

Ethical approval : Not required.

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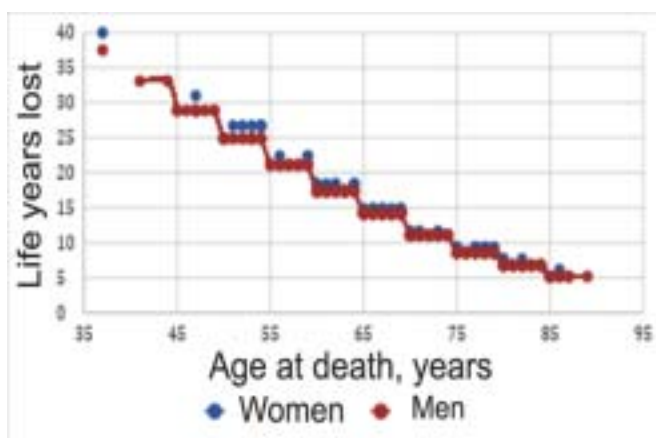


Fig 1 — Reduction in life expectancy

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