

South Carolina Researchers Study Economic Burden of Caesarean Sections in Bangladesh

A team of researchers from the Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior and Health Services Policy and Management departments at the University of South Carolina's Arnold School of Public Health along with collaborators from the University of Padova (Italy), Jahangirnagar University, International Center for Diarrheal Disease Research, Bangladesh, and The World Bank (Bangladesh) have completed a study on the economic burden related to increasing caesarean section rates in Bangladesh. The paper was published in [PLOS One](#) with postdoctoral fellow [Rifat Haider](#) serving as lead author.

Cesarean Section (CS) delivery has been increasing rapidly worldwide, and Bangladesh is no exception. In Bangladesh, the CS rate has increased from about 3% in 2000 to about 24% in 2014. This study examines the trend in CS in Bangladesh over the last fifteen years and implications of this increasing CS rates on health care expenditures.

The researchers analyzed birth data from the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey for the years 2000-2014 and healthcare expenditure data from the 2010 Bangladesh Maternal Mortality Survey. They observed that 33% of institutional deliveries were conducted through CS and the rate increased to 63% in 2014.

Further, the average medical care expenditure for a CS delivery in Bangladesh was about BDT 22,085 (USD 276) in 2010 while the cost of a normal delivery was BDT 3,565 (USD 45). Health care expenditure due to CS deliveries accounted for about 66.5% of total expenditure on all deliveries in Bangladesh in 2010.

About 10.3% of Total Health Expenditure (THE) in 2010 was due to delivery costs, while CS costs contribute to 6.9% of THE and rapid increase in CS deliveries will mean that delivering babies will represent even a higher proportion of THE in the future despite declining crude birth rate.

The authors concluded that high CS delivery rate and the negative health outcomes associated with the procedure on mothers and child births incur huge economic burden on the families. This is creating inappropriate allocation of scarce resources in the poor economy like Bangladesh. Therefore it is important to control this unnecessary CS practices by the health providers by introducing litigation and special guidelines in the health policy.