

The Impact of Health Care Cost on the Living Conditions of Farmers Suffering from CKDu: A Case of Keselpotha Village in Redimaliyadda Area in Sri Lanka

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Many data sources confirmed that more than 15 percent of the farmers in North Central and Uva provinces in Sri Lanka are affected by the Chronic Kidney Disease of uncertain aetiology (CKDu). However, dearth of empirical evidence regarding the present state of the living condition of farmers who suffer from CKDu and how their health care cost affects the living condition represents a significant gap which is a limitation to formulate policies. Therefore, this study attempted to explore the impact of health care cost of farmers who suffered from CKDu on their living conditions. The study mainly employed survey method to gather data. *Keselpotha* village in *Redimaliyadda* area located in *Uva* province in Sri Lanka, where a large number of farmers who suffered from CKDu lived, was selected as a case. There were 132 farmers who suffered from CKDu living in this village and data were collected from all the patients conducting face-to-face interviews on a structural questionnaire. The data were analysed using multiple regression method. Results revealed that direct financial cost of treatments had a negative significant impact on the farmers' living conditions which was measured using the index developed by Gaur (2013) ($\beta = -0.499$ and $t\text{-value} = 5.99$). Costs for traveling to participate in the clinic in government/private hospitals and expenses on laboratory testing and medicines were the main cost items that they bore. Further, the study assessed the indirect cost for treatments considering the manpower cost. The regression results showed that the indirect cost for treatments had a negative significant impact on the living conditions of farmers who suffered from CKDu ($\beta = -0.338$ and $t\text{-value} = 3.92$). The direct cost reduced treatment ability of farmers who suffered from CKDu showing significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.122$ and $t\text{-value} = 1.72$) and indirect cost also had a powerful impact on reducing the treatment ability of farmers who suffered from CKDu ($\beta = -0.299$ and $t\text{-value} = 3.52$). Finally, the results confirmed that the health care costs negatively correlated with the living conditions thereby decreasing the treatment ability of farmers who suffered from CKDu ($\beta = 0.746$ and $t\text{-value} = 17.14$). Thus, the study has provided sufficient empirical evidences to conclude that the health care costs of farmers who suffered from CKDu had a significant impact on the treatment ability thereby diminishing the living conditions. Implementing supportive measures (health care insurance, subsidy etc.) would help to improve treatment ability thereby improving the living conditions of farmers who suffer from CKDu.

Keywords: CKDu, farmers, health care cost, living condition, treatment ability