

Case Study: Nupur Bano

I'm 46-year-old. I live with my married son and his family in Vishwas Nagar in Bangalore (a poor neighborhood). My husband died of heart attack 3 years back. My son has a small job in a garment factory. After my husband's death, I started keeping unwell. One day I went to a private doctor in our neighborhood complaining of weakness. He gave me some medicines and asked me to undergo blood test. I waited for some days and finally went to a diagnostic centre to get my blood test done. I was told that I had high blood sugar and diabetic. I don't eat sweets so could not believe that I had sugar problem. The doctor told me to repeat the test in a month's time. I consulted my son and daughter-in-law who suggested that I should go to a government health centre and get all tests done. My son took me to the Government health centre. We waited for long as there were many patients in the OPD. Finally, when we met the doctor, she asked me to undergo a couple of tests which she wrote on a paper. She suggested that I should get these tests done from outside as all diagnostic tests are done for patients outside. We went to the diagnostic centre which was right opposite the government hospital. We were asked to come the following day before breakfast.

My son could not take leave from his job anymore. He can't afford to miss a day's wage too. He has two children to look after. I waited for a week and finally approached my neighbor who agreed to accompany me. I then went to see the doctor in the Government centre with the reports. She also said that my blood sugar was high and prescribed medicines. I asked softly if I could get those medicines in the Government centre itself. She smilingly said, "no you have to buy it from medical shop (Private Pharmacy), there is no stock here".

We went to the pharmacy opposite to the Government hospital to buy medicine. The doctor had prescribed for one month as she categorically said I need to have it daily if I don't want the disease to take a toll on my life. My son asked how much this would cost for a month. He replied saying that it would be around 1000 INR. We had to get the medicines for one week first.

While we were heading back home, my son assured me that he will arrange the money and get the medicine as soon as possible. Within two days my son bought medicine for 15 days. Once completed, I had to wait for almost a week before I got it for another 10 days. My son was managing to get medicine as and when he had money. But the doctor at Government hospital had told that I should take medicine regularly and go back to her after a month. The doctor had told me that I should stop eating sweet and change diet. But we eat what is available at home or what my son brings.

Taking medicine on and off continued for 3 months before we went again to the doctor at CHC with blood report from private laboratory. This time we could not meet the doctor we had seen earlier, she was deputed to other hospital, we met another doctor. He said, blood sugar level is still high, and shouted at me for not taking medicine regularly! He said "if you do not follow our

instructions, how to manage your diabetes” I looked at my son, again gathering courage I asked, can you prescribe medicines which are less expensive? Doctor said, these medicines are good for you, you continue with them only. He said you come next month; we may have the medicine in CHC to give you. But after a month I got only one type of medicine in the CHC and I had to buy 2 more from private pharmacy.

One of my relatives told me that I could try Ayurvedic medicine (alternative medicine) it is less expensive, and it cures the disease completely. I went to the Ayurvedic doctor with my relative. He told, his medicine will not cure the illness, but helps to reduce dosage of medicine I’m taking.

It has been more than 10 years since I have diabetes and I developed hypertension 5 years ago. It has been more than a year since I last visited any doctor and I continue taking the medicine prescribed by the doctor at the CHC. I try to take Ayurvedic medicine when I run out of my regular medicine, and I feel helpless looking at my son; my illness has become burden on him. Over a period, due to this illness, my body has become weak, my legs are painful, and my vision is getting bad.

Reading question

- 1- Was Nupur Banu non-compliant of diabetic medication?
- 2- What are some of the constraints in accessing NCD care?