

Communicable Diseases

ABSTRACT

Sanitation, food control, vaccines, and antibiotics have reduced the toll of communicable diseases, saving millions of lives. Smallpox was eradicated in 1977, and poliomyelitis eradication is close. Measles mortality has reduced drastically yet outbreaks occur where immunization lags. HIV/AIDS emerged in the 1980s, grew into a global pandemic costing millions of lives, and despite progress remains a major global health issue. Malaria and tuberculosis still cause millions of deaths. Influenza pandemics with new, deadly versions continue to appear. Neglected tropical diseases are responding to global donor efforts. Newly emerging diseases move to new regions and became endemic, and deadly localized hemorrhagic fevers threaten to transmit more widely. Rapid mass travel allows infectious diseases in isolated villages to quickly become global threats. New strains of viruses, antibiotic resistance, and microorganisms causing chronic diseases are challenges for infectious disease control requiring continuing political, financial, and scientific support, and much tenacity.

SUPPORT MATERIAL

Student Competencies: Transferable Knowledge and Skills

The following are points of emphasis highlighting key principles that public health graduates are expected to understand and apply into practice. The key points arise from this chapter and other studies in specialized courses, seminars, readings during public health education, and continuing education. The selected skills and knowledge are divided into two parts. The first consists of core questions pertaining to immediate student requirements, while the second refers to competencies essential for successful public health practitioners. These include competencies recommended by the American Public Health Association in 2007, as well as those of the European Association of Schools of Public Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada's 2008 Report on Core Competencies. For more detailed competencies please consult the Association of Schools of Public Health website at: <http://www.asph.org/document.cfm?page=851>

Part I: Core Questions

1. What are the major methods of control of communicable diseases?
2. What are the major epidemiological steps required in investigation of an infectious disease outbreak or epidemic?

3. Describe a current international standard immunization program for infants, for children, and for adults.
4. Discuss the following issues in immunization policy:
 - (a) OPV vs IPV; OPV and IPV
 - (b) catch-up vaccination and control of hepatitis B
 - (c) eradication of measles, rubella, *Hemophilus influenzae* B, and varicella.
5. What is herd immunity? Discuss its relation to control and eradication policies for polio, measles, rubella, hepatitis B, and hepatitis A.
6. What is the importance of a parent refusing to immunize his or her child? What is the significance of a doctor failing to immunize his or her patients at the appropriate times?
7. Why are knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices of a population important in infectious disease control, such as tuberculosis? Give other examples.
8. What are the necessary characteristics of a disease for selection as a target for eradication?
9. What are the characteristics of a successful immunization program and how should it be monitored?
10. How do diseases normally found in tropical developing countries relate to populations in industrialized countries?

Part II: Knowledge and Skills

1. Be aware of the successes and limitations of immunizations as one of the fundamental methodologies of public health, as well as evolving public perception of vaccines.
2. Understand the significance of the newly emerging infectious diseases.
3. Understand the effects of herd immunity, vaccine coverage, and their application to specific vaccine-preventable diseases.
4. Discuss programs for eradication of diseases such as smallpox, polio, malaria, measles, and tuberculosis.
5. Identify communities or population groups at elevated risk for specific communicable diseases, and be able to apply preventive measures and plan public awareness campaigns.
6. Understand the relationship of infectious and chronic diseases both as direct causes and as important comorbidity.
7. Diarrheal, respiratory, and vaccine-preventable diseases are the leading causes of child mortality globally. Discuss large-scale prevention strategies and their challenges.
8. How do communicable diseases and their control relate to the New Public Health?

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