

Expanding the Concept of Public Health

ABSTRACT

Ancient societies recognized the needs of sanitation, food safety, workers' health, and medical care to protect against disease and to promote well-being and civic prosperity. New energies and knowledge since the eighteenth century produced landmark discoveries such as prevention of scurvy and vaccination against smallpox. The biological germ theory and competing miasma theory each proved effective in sanitation, and immunization in control of infectious diseases. Non-communicable diseases as the leading causes of mortality have responded to innovative preventive care of health risk factors, smoking, hypertension, obesity, physical inactivity, unhealthful diets, and diabetes mellitus. Health promotion proved effective to modern public health in tackling disease origins, individual behavior, and social and economic conditions. The global burden of infectious and non-communicable diseases, aging and chronic illness faces rising costs and still inadequate prevention. The evolution of concepts of public health will have to address these new challenges of population health.

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. Describe the evolution of public health thinking from the sanitary revolution through social medicine to the present.

2. What is the significance for the New Public Health of the following concepts:
 - (a) Host–environment–agent
 - (b) The natural history of disease
 - (c) The sanitary revolution
 - (d) Community-oriented primary care
 - (e) Healthy Cities
 - (f) The health field concept
 - (g) Health for All.
3. Describe primary, secondary, and tertiary disease prevention
4. What is the WHO's definition of health?
5. How do social and economic conditions affect the health of the individual?
6. Discuss the natural history of disease and the spectrum of health and disease.
7. What is health promotion? How does it relate to clinical medicine and to social policy?
8. What are risk factors for disease? Give examples.
9. What is an epidemiological transition? What is a demographic transition?
10. Define the New Public Health and how it differs from traditional definitions of public health.
11. What standards are needed in different aspects of health? How are they derived, enforced, and promoted?
12. What is "good public health practice"?
13. What are health targets in public health and in individual patient care? Give examples.
14. Why are health promotion and social ecology important elements of the New Public Health?
15. Discuss how health and economic development are related.
16. Discuss the roles of advocacy and consumerism in the New Public Health.
17. How do individual patient care and management of health systems relate to the New Public Health?

Part II: Knowledge and Skills

1. Explain the definition and objectives of public health.
2. Understand population health, and demographic and epidemiological transitions.
3. Recognize the scope of functions of public health versus clinical medicine.
4. Describes the importance of social and community aspects of public health.
5. Understand the concepts of Health for All and Health in All as global policies.
6. Recognize the priority of primary care in population health.

7. Understand the following concepts and approaches: risk factors, the case for action, the health field concept, health targets, political economy and health, health and development, human ecology and health promotion, integrative approach to prevention, and public health.
8. Explain the Ottawa Charter, basic concepts of health promotion, community models of health promotion, and the Healthy Cities project as a global movement.
9. Understand the paradigm of the New Public Health.
10. Describes factors contributing to demographic changes affecting the age distribution of a population.
11. Describes the significance of the Alma-Ata Declaration in 1978.
12. Describes major international programs of health targets.

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