

## **Public Health: Ultimate solution for many of the health problems**

Health has long been understood in social and community context. Even in days of Hippocrates, it was recognized that where you live, both socially and geographically shapes you to less or more to be susceptible to disease. More recently, public health has found a niche in health and health care system throughout the world. No matter the subject, health is no exception and it is said that the great 19<sup>th</sup> century physician and public health expert Rudolph Virchow, was once dispatched by the rulers of Germany to assess the public health crisis faced by community. After a thorough evaluation, his prescription was simple and to the point “Let them have freedom”. Public health remains poorly understood by its prime beneficiary, the public as well as many of its dedicated practitioners. Although public health's results, as measured in terms of improved health status, diseases prevented, scarce recourses saved, and improved quality of life, are more apparent today than ever before and society seldom links the activities of public health with its results.

Although the complete history of public health is a fascinating saga in its own right, this section presents only selected high lights. Suffice is it to say that when ancient cultures perceived illness as the manifestation of supernatural forces, they also felt that little in the way of either personal or collective action was possible. For many centuries disease was synonymous with epidemic. Diseases, including horrific epidemics of infectious diseases such as the Black Death (plague), leprosy, and cholera, were phenomena to be accepted.

Public health has gone through different era with multifaceted changing concepts; sanitary awakening, health promotional, social engineering, health for all and now Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Public Health in health care system has reached a new level of intensity and urgency. World wide, every decade or so there has been intense debate about how best to manage, pay and augument for health care.

With the advent of industrialism and imperialism, the stage was set for epidemic diseases to increase their terrible toll. As populations shifted to urban centers for purpose of commerce and industry, public health conditions worsened. The mixing of dense populations living in unsanitary conditions and working long hours in unsafe and exploitative industries with wave after wave of cholera, smallpox, typhoid, tuberculosis, yellow fever, and other diseases was a common phenomenon. Such disaster struck again and again across the globe, but most seriously and most often at the industrialization seaport cities that provided the portal of entry of diseases transported as stow away along side commercial cargo.

Public health calls for collective action to protect, promote and improve the health and thus advocates community participation through realization and vocalization of the health problems of the community. In our developing, conservative country, where low literacy rate, poor economy, law & order and governance issues, has put public health approach for improving the health, very low on agenda, of not only political stakeholders but unfortunately in general population as well. This is reflected by in ability to eradicate the polio, even with extensive phase of polio eradication for years, epidemic of dengue, emergence of resistant TB, poor functioning of public sector health care system, with unsatisfied health care services providers, leading to poor quality of health services to community, and last but not the least, adding to the complexities of the situation is the lack of applied research that will come up with the solutions to the local problems related to health in our community. Health in public and community context includes variables that examine policy change & their impact on immunization, infant feeding, environmental sanitation, social and behavioral saga, dental services for children ----- who name but a few.

Collectively they remind us of necessity of incorporating the public and community context of health into policy decision to bridge the gulf that remains between the logical understanding of what works to improve the public health and to make desired advances a real theme, for disease eradication, improving quality of life & increasing life expectancy.

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