

What is public health the goals and values of public health

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Public Health First Last Dr. TeacherFirst TeacherLast Number March Public HealthIssues of Public Health Significance vs. Personal Health Personal health issues specific to an individual whereas those related to public health concern the community, society, and, at times, the entire human race. The definition is not that straightforward or compartmentalized though. For example, smoking is an issue of personal as well as public health importance. The difference lies in how an issue, disease, or concern is addressed that places it in one of the two categories. By smoking one places his or her personal health at risk. But considering research that show it as the largest contributor to preventable fatal diseases in the United States (Centers for Disease, 2002), it becomes an issue of greater public health significance. So, in essence, public health significance issues are those that affect the health of communities. They are not restricted to diseases alone and relate to creating an overall environment within which individuals can live a fulfilling and healthy life (Association of Schools, n. d.). The well-being of public can be pursued at the community, state, national, or global levels. Examples are global campaigns to eradicate polio, national campaigns to inform public about risks of smoking, inform public about advantages of physical exercise, etc. Issues of public health significance can also be attached a monetary value. For example, treatment of cardiovascular diseases costs billions of dollars in the U. S. every year. Information on prevention and promotion of a healthy lifestyle can reduce such costs. Informing the public Addressing public health issue would require experts to, at a minimum, identify the issue, conduct epidemiology studies to see patterns, risk factors, and interventions needed, set policies for addressing

the issues based on these studies, and finally to inform the public of the risks, significance, and prevention techniques for the respective issues. Informing the public effectively, accurately, and encouraging them to adopt the prevention techniques is possibly the largest change agent in improving public health. Recognizing this aspect, in 1979, the United States Government launched a wide ranging program called Healthy People to “ set and monitor national health objectives” with its latest version called Healthy People 2010 (Centers for Disease, 2009; Neighmond, 2000). Informing and educating the public through such programs is essential because it has a threefold benefit. Firstly, it would help the individual with critical information to empower herself or himself to take charge of their own health, secondly it would improve the quality of life and reduce the incidences of diseases, and finally, as a result of this reduction, it would save money in treatment costs. The task, however, is not easy. It takes enormous skills and a deeply integrated set of coordinated activities to execute the plan. While an official report is expected in spring 2011, preliminary results have shown that only 52% of the goals of Healthy People 2010 were achieved (Hobson, 2010). The only bright spot was the focus area of heart related diseases and strokes where significant reduction from “ 203 persons per 100, 000 in 1999 to 135 persons per 100, 000 in 2007” (Hobson, 2010). This brings the discussion to the author’s opinion on which achievement contributed to maximum reduction in morbidity and mortality. The author believes that during 1990-1999, the focus area of heart diseases and stroke achieved greatest reduction in morbidity and mortality. This trend continued in subsequent years as noted above. References Association of Schools of Public Health. (n.

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