

# Theories and models of health education

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Theories and Models of Health Education Health issues are being investigated, researched and addressed by various people and in various ways. Health services aim to provide health services in an efficient and effective manner. There are a number of theories and models that aim at describing, analyzing and altering the behaviors and actions of individuals in the health area. This paper aims at analyzing different health education models and their effectiveness in the context of community health education.

a. Health Belief Model Health belief model (HBM) suggests that an individual weighs his health actions against the perceived susceptibility to a disease or health condition. It further states that the health behaviors and prevention steps are dependent on the belief of an individual related to the gravity of the health condition (i. e. how severely the specific health condition or behavior would impact). HBM also suggests that health preventive actions by individuals are taken after an evaluation of an individual's perceptions about the outcomes/improvements in the current or perceived health state. Hence, the beliefs regarding hurdles that may hinder the move towards preventive actions provide a more vivid image of how and why health interventions fail in the community setting(Nardi & Petr, 2003). In community health education, HBM may have far-reaching impacts. The core idea of HBM is to affect or influence individual perceptions. Perceptions of a person are highly linked with the surrounding environment and beliefs of other people. The HBM, hence, encourages positive health behaviors by shedding light on the negative impacts of certain actions (Glanz, Rimer and National Cancer Institute, 1997). For instance, susceptibility to obesity as a result of fast-food reliance may be highlighted by community health educators as a negative impact to influence individuals' eating habits. A

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preventive measure might be physical activities, avoidance of fast food and change in regular food consumption patterns. Community health educators may encourage individuals towards the preventive actions by referring to the success stories of such actions, making healthier food like vegetables and other food stuff available to them and by encouraging home-cooked food consumption.

b. Social learning Theory Social learning theory identifies three major contributors of an individual's behavior including personal experiences, environmental factors and behaviors. The social learning theory provides society or the environment as a learning setting where an individual experiences situations that affects his perceptions as well as behaviors regarding a particular action, health behavior or activity. In community health setting this theory may be used to promote long-term health promotional strategies by encouraging people to share their experiences and learn from others'. This theory, with proper efficacy and capability lessons, may discourage health risking actions and behaviors by providing real-life experiences to individuals.

c. Theory of Reasoned Action This theory proposes that an individual's actions and behaviors are reliant on the intention he holds. The theory further highlights three elements or forces that derive the intention of a person which consist of an individual's attitude or point of view regarding the action or behavior, the subjective norms and their perceived behavioral control (Gochman 1997). If a person is more of the opinion that diving with a seat belt reduces the chances or injuries and the relatives would take him as a responsible individual even if some accident occurs (subjective norm), he is more likely to feel motivated and able to wear seatbelts. This suggests a strong intention to wear seatbelt and reduce the chances of injuries in case of accidents. This theory, in

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community health education, may alter or strengthen a person's intention leading to their behaviors. The basic idea is to change the attitude and subjective norms of a person by educating and encouraging healthy behaviors.

d. Diffusions of Innovations Theory Diffusion of innovation theory, unlike the other theories discussed, aims at a larger population. It does not take individual behaviors or change in individual behaviors in account but instead, it focuses on the wider community. This theory proposes to integrate innovative ideas. However, in order to select the innovative idea, out of the largely available innovations today, the theory suggests considering relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, treatability and observability of the innovation. It concerns with the dissemination of innovation throughout the community, organization or region. The main idea is to promote and sustain an innovative and beneficial idea in terms of health promotion and reduced risks. For community health education, this theory may be helpful in capturing the wider population easily. The spread of news about an innovation like a product, idea or program is easier to reach if planned properly (Bensley & Brookins-Fisher, 2009). The community health improves as the ideas develop, disseminate and evolve with the passage of time. This theory, hence, aims at educating people about innovations in the health field to aid the community.

Strategy for Behavior Change in Elderly Elderly population has experiences, life-long struggles, less courage and more health issues than younger generation. The intervention for a behavior change related to Elderly must not highlight the negative impacts he has already conceived by a specific behavior. Such a strategy might further reduce the efficacy of the elderly to bring any change in his actions and behaviors. Instead, a rather optimistic approach with high motivation

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towards adoption of healthier practices might help in changing the behavior of the old-aged people. The diffusion of innovations theory is of particular importance to influence this age group. The elderly may be convinced on the effectiveness or benefits of a new idea, product or behavior as it did not exist before. The innovation, however, must take into consideration the factors like compatibility of the innovation with the age-group along with the age-related issues. For instance, to quit smoking elderly may be provided with e-cigarettes which provide an alternative that reduces the harms of smoking to a certain extent.

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