

Direct and indirect impacts on health in new zealand



- Nina Grace A. Martinez

ASSESSMENT 2

This report is about the different direct and indirect impacts on health in New Zealand and in which these determinants will affect the inequalities in health.

1. Determinant Factors

In order to improve the health status of the population and reduce health inequalities in New Zealand, it is important to identify and understand the main factors that protect and promote good health. These factors are known as the determinants of health. Some of these factors are *income and poverty, employment and occupation, education, housing* , and *culture and ethnicity* . *Social networking* is also a factor and of increasing interest. There is now good evidence that social, cultural and economic factors are the most important determinants of good health.

Demographic distribution

There are 4, 579, 228 people in total here in New Zealand. It is estimated that there is an increase of one person every 5 minutes. Statistically, there is 1 birth in every 8 minutes and 49 seconds, 1 death in every 19 minutes and 2 seconds and a net migration in every 8 minutes and 25 seconds. For life expectancy, statistically more females live longer than males, approximately 83% females and 79% males. This is due to the higher number of males who are introduced early to smoking, alcohol and drugs. It happens even within the family, inside their own houses wherein, as narrated by you (Ms. Alma

Villanueva), that a seven (7) year old child, if I'm not mistaken, was already been using drugs.

Income

Income is the most important determinant of health and is strongly related to health and well-being. On average, household income in New Zealand declined between 1981 and 1993, with single parent, Maori and Pacific households experiencing the greatest income reductions. The link between poverty and ill health is clear; with exemptions like the most financially incapable families experience the highest rates of illness and premature death. Greater income inequality within society may also be associated with increased overall mortality. Both poverty and income inequalities increased in New Zealand over the past decade. Having less income will lessen an individual or families access to health care. All other problems correlate with low income household. A person will be hesitant to seek for any medical treatment fearing what the cost might be. He or she is more concern on what to put on the table.

Employment

Employment also plays a particular part in health. Income and employment goes hand in hand as a determinant for health. When a person is unemployed, obviously he or she has a low income or none at all. This will be a factor for him or her to even sustain for him or herself more so with the access to health if he or she is ill. Employment not only affects a person's physical health but also his or her mental health because being unemployed may bring depression and other psychological ailments due to lack of food
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and any means to sustain his or her health and well-being and limited or no access to health care services. Even though it is important to have jobs for good health, there are also some occupation related risks that can jeopardize an individual's health and well-being like causing him or her injuries while at work.

Education

Low level of education is associated with poor health. Education goes alongside with income and employment as it determines one's status in society and economy. Having good or higher educational level will make one more productive in terms of having a job and making more income thus more literate and are able to comprehend with any medical treatments needed for one's well-being and health. Educated people can make healthier decisions in life about health-related habits such as diet and exercise. Statistically speaking, around 20% of New Zealand adults have poor literacy skills.

Housing

Houses here in New Zealand are very expensive. The high cost of houses is making it difficult for families with low income to budget their expenses for food, education, transport and health services. Because of the high cost of houses, families tend to overcrowd in one house thus making them more susceptible to diseases like respiratory infection or meningococcal disease.

Culture and Ethnicity/Traditions/Religious beliefs

Cultural factors have its positive and negative influence on health. Like for example, Maoris have a higher number of mortality rate than in New Zealanders because Maoris are more passive in their attitude towards health and most of them lack education and some have no jobs at all thus they have no access to health care services. Maori people experience more health problems thus their mortality and morbidity rates are higher compared to non-Maoris. These are all due to poor socioeconomic status.

Some cultures also have their different ways of treating or dealing with any physical ailments. Like for example in my home country, the Philippines, we have different traditions or cultural practices in dealing with illnesses. One of which is consulting a “ quack doctor” or faith healer wherein this particular faith healer is said to be an expert in curing any unexplainable illness. We Filipinos are believers of the supernatural beings in this world. Especially those who are on a below-average familial status, they are those that strongly believe in faith healers or the supernatural beings. For them, any illness is associated with “ na engkanto” or witchcraft. That being said, any traditions or cultural practices has its impacts on health. Consulting faith healers or others with no medical background or knowledge will delay treatment or even cause further damage or worst, death, to patients because of malpractice.

Another thing besides culture and tradition is religion. Religion plays a role in health as well. Some religious groups practice differently towards health. For example, Jehovah’s Witness people, they are not allowed to receive any blood transfusion, even if this will prolong the life of the person, still it is not allowed because it will be against their religious practice.

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Social Networking/Social Cohesion

People with strong family, community and cultural ties have better health than people who are socially isolated. Socially isolated people are more prone to having mental or psychological problems. These people include single parent families, people with mental illness, people who are unemployed and those who are living alone and who are old. Being isolated from society or the community is depressing, making one vulnerable to any harm possible.

Political Values

Making policy that influence health is important. The New Zealand government is responsible for it. A policy about health and well-being of the community is very critical. These policies differ from country to country. One of the policies here in New Zealand is the National Drug Policy wherein its aim is to reduce or limit the supply and use of harmful drug related substances like alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs. With this policy, the people of New Zealand are now more aware of its effects and consequences if they use or consume such harmful drugs or alcohol. This policy is pro health and enhancement of the people's well-being.

2. Public Attitudes on health

Attitude is a person's way of thinking or what he or she feels towards something or maybe even someone. An individual's value is the backbone of his or her attitude. However he or she perceives health is completely because of how she or he views it. Behavior on the other hand is how that

person acts or reacts to a particular situation. It is also influenced by the attitude that person has.

It is known that New Zealand is a multicultural country. There is a mix of every race and ethnicity in New Zealand thus, each and every ethnicity, race or culture has its own beliefs and practices on health, and each has its own perception or attitude towards health.

For example, the Maori people, majority of them are not educated; therefore most of them are illiterate thus making them unaware of what are the benefits of having access to health care services.

Another example is the Pacific Islanders, wherein they believe that smoking cessation must come from within, meaning that there should not be any assistance from any programmes of the Ministry of Health to help someone, from the Pacific Islander group, to quit smoking.

Others, however, are more aware of what illness and health is. Like the non-Maoris or other New Zealanders and even the migrants, because they are more educated and knowledgeable as to what illness can do to them and how important health is to all. Awareness is the key to good health and well-being of a person.

However, for some who are aware, still there are hesitations to access health services because of the cost. Cost of the medical consultation and the medication. Another factor is the lack of availability or time to seek treatment. These are all due to the different determinant factors affecting health and well-being.

The Maoris and Pacific Islanders or other ethnic groups that lack awareness should be taught of the importance of health. Make them aware of its effects and consequences if they do not access health care service when they are sick. Like for example the importance of immunization that provides protection from communicable diseases. Also the importance of screening programmes for Cancer for example. Screening is highly important to detect potential problems at an early stage especially with asymptomatic people. It can also provide or offer effective interventions. Awareness and prevention is key to a healthy well-being of a person. To access health, the people must first know that health services do exist.

Health is strongly influence by a wide range of cultural, social, economic and environmental factors here in New Zealand. A person's income, education, ethnicity, culture and social status can be very influential with his or her health and well-being. Without income and employment there will be issues concerning his or her basic needs, access to health, transportation and other needs. One must be educated to ensure jobs.

Poverty and unemployment is rampant in New Zealand despite the booming outlook of its country. The government plays a vital role in formulating laws or policies derived from national and international laws that will then benefit or help the poor and unemployed people of New Zealand by subsidizing health services, providing free houses and free education for children of poor families.

Prioritizing health on the agenda of the public policy will make the public more aware of the significance of health on the government and policy

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maker's decisions. The participation of the public to the policy is a very strong factor to determine the success of the policy.

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