

Social determinants of health



The World Health Organization has defined good health as not just the absence of illness, but a condition of complete mental, physical and social well-being. Good health allows people to contribute fully in society and provides by which individual can achieve their objectiveness in life. The following determinant factors have direct and indirect impacts on health with regards to planning, implementation, and the evaluation of health interventions:

Demographic distribution of populations

Demographic changes influence population health. Expected demographic trends, such as the increase in an ageing population, one-parent families and people beginning a family later in life, will affect both the quality of New Zealand's social and economic setting and the health condition of the population. Personal lifestyle issues such as smoking and alcohol, diet, sexual behaviour and physical activity are also significant. However, health is also influenced by community and social impacts, working and living conditions and wide-ranging cultural, socioeconomic and environmental conditions. A safe and clean environment, meaningful roles in society, adequate income, good housing, education, affordable nutritious food and social support within societies all promote towards good health.

Human Values

Individual attitudes are one psychological aspect that impacts physical health. An attitude can be understood of as a positive or negative assessment of ideas, people, event or objects. Attitudes are unpredictable; can be moulded from a person's present and past; and can affect a person's

well-being and behaviour. More or less attitudes are inhibited while others are uninhibited. Inhibited and uninhibited attitudes both influence individual's behaviour, although in different methods. The type of attitude we have about a specific person, idea or event influences how we act in connection to it and so, our experience of stress in connection to it. As we have realised, stress is very associated with both mental and physical health, so if we have a certain attitude to something that adds to our stress level, our health may suffer as an effect.

Moods also have significant effects for mental and physical health. Negative moods can impact individual's behaviour by defining how they understand and interpret the world around them. Understanding an incidence in a negative way is a risk factor for mental health problems including anxiety, depression, poor self-esteem, physiological stress and aggression, all of which negatively affect individual's well-being and health. Positive moods, on the other part, are considered to increase the possibility of well-being and physical health through eliminating these risk issues.

Political Values

Democratization is a must to guarantee the respect of human rights, fairness and social justice. Development in health beliefs to achieve respect and fairness in human dignity should not wait. Challenges to attain fairness in health care are usually accepted even by the most authoritative administrations. Decision makers play a key role in implementing ethical values in health care that ensure fairness, respect and justice for human beings. It is the accountability of professionals, authorities, as well as moral,

consumer protection groups and human rights to provide decision makers with reliable, valid data on the qualities of approving an right code of health care that safeguards justice and fairness.

Culture and Ethnicity

In general, my perception of the function of culture as a determinant of health is not that developed as well as my knowledge of many socioeconomic issues. Though, culture should be measured differently from social determinants. For many groups, mostly ethnic groups, culture is essential to well-being and health, somewhat separately from socioeconomic factors. My understanding of health must place culture as a main determinant and plans to develop health in various groups must be mindful of the impact of culture.

According to Last 1995, an ethnic group is embodied by individual cultural and social tradition preserved between generations within the group, a common origin and history, a sense of identity within the group and usually a common genetic custom. All cultures have structures of health beliefs to elucidate what causes disease, how it can be treated or cured, and who should be included in the procedure. It has a big effect on health because they only follow the beliefs or tradition that they inherited from generation to generation and it is hard to alter the way they behave though it is not helping to improve their health.

Religion

Certain features of religion influence degree of disease, illness and death. According to Levin 1994, there are an amount of probable underlying pathways, including through psychosocial effects, behaviour, religious faith and rites, the psychodynamics of belief structures as well as supernatural explanations involving miracles. Some religions expressly restrict or prohibit certain actions or behaviours like alcohol, relating to diet and sexual behaviour. Religious involvement can encourage social connectedness and delivers social support. Beliefs may lead to a better sense of connectedness, although they can both build up self-confidence and also provide increase to depression, guilt and self-doubt.

Social connectedness and social support

According to Kawachi et al. 1996, there is proof that connectedness or cohesion in organisation is associated to the health of communities and individuals. Social connectedness refers to a organisation in which individual work towards common objectives and in which differences is acknowledge but does not end into conflict. There are some structures of organisation that can contribute to high levels of social connectedness: family strong ties or whanau; high levels of political and civil involvement; a pleasant and safe environment including housing, strong community identity and a good social network, good public transport and other public facilities. Social difficulties such as dangerous and poorly paid work, unemployment, poor housing, a degraded environment, fear of crime, and isolation due to insufficient transport all be a factor to poor social connectedness.

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