

Lifestyle and health

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The role of social and behavioral factors in health care can hardly be over estimated. Most of the diseases known today are caused by the careless life styles of people regarding recreation, eating and working habits. It can be, hence, observed that the healthy individuals have good health behavior. A proper study of the behavior of healthy individuals can therefore produce valuable data which can be utilized by the researchers in determining correct causes of a disease.

The most important issue concerning the research in this field is that the medical practitioners generally do not recognize the importance of behavioral aspect of a disease. This has resulted in a lack of interest in the medical community towards the particular community. Moreover, most of the research today in the field of medicine is sponsored by pharmaceutical companies. Studying the healthy habits of individuals and convincing others to adopt them naturally causes a clash of interest among the pharmaceutical companies and the researchers. Hence such programs seldom attract good funding from companies. Lack of funds and interest can hence be regarded as the major issue in conducting such kind of research. There are certain government or charity funded research programs which can initiate research activities in this field but the funding provided by these resources is low and cannot fulfill the requirements of an extensive research program. Very few research methodologies exist which can produce quantitative results of behavioral research activities. Hence it is hard to convince funding authorities that an investment in such research programs will pay off. At the end, one of the major issues concerned with almost every medical research is the ethical concerns. It is hard to convince healthy individuals to participate in such research programs. Integrity of researchers in

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determining the research outcomes is also very important especially for a research whose implications are not well appreciated.

The method for conducting such a research is similar to most of the other health care research programs. A survey has to be conducted on the individuals with good health record to study their habits. The target population should be identified so that people from diverse background can be observed and general conclusions should be drawn from the research. The parameters for assessment of habits shall be clearly defined e. g. daily exercise routine, use of alcohol or tobacco, use of junk food etc. Health records can be obtained from insurance companies and/or community hospitals. Then the parameters defined for the assessment criteria should be transformed in the form of a questionnaire. The data thus obtained can be quantified by recording the number of individuals answering ' yes' or ' no' to a certain question. Similarly, data can be arranged according to different heart or musculoskeletal diseases with number of individuals having a disease and the number of individuals from the same group having a certain habit. Various statistical methods can hence be used to derive conclusions from the data in this way.

Benefits of this kind of research are far greater than most of the other medical research initiatives. A research on the behavioral aspect of health care generating quantitative results can support other researches on causes of different diseases. It can help the medical practitioners in determining the correct treatment as well. Many diseases are hereditary and their causes run in the genes of a family. Such diseases can be avoided affectively if the doctors recommend prevention measures to the individuals before the symptoms of the disease become pronounced. If such an approach is used

for the health care of the individuals, it will save both time and resources for the cure of various diseases. Moreover, people will be saved from side effects of various medicine hence preventing further disease and loss of resources for its cure.

It is rightly said that prevention is better than cure and hence developing healthy habits in the individuals is the best solution to the health care problems we face today. If research is carried out to assess the habits of healthy individuals, it can give reasonable insight into the behavioral factors serving as a cause for various chronic diseases.

References

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