

Primary Health Care

Lec. 9

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This is a new approach to health care which came into existence in 1978. It integrates at the community level all the factors required for improving the health status of the population. These services are simple and efficient with regard to cost, techniques and organization that are readily accessible to those concerned and that contribute to improving the living conditions of individuals, families and the community as a whole.

Primary health care (P.H.C) is available to all people at the first level of health care, it's the first level of contact of individual, family and community with the national health system, where essential health care is provided.

P.H.C. is defined as "essential health care based on practical, scientifically sound and socially acceptable methods and technology made universally accessible to individuals and families in the community through their full participation and at a cost that the community and the country can afford".

It was described as a best approach to achieve the goal of HEALTH FOR ALL by the year of 2000, this means that the health is to be brought within the reach of every one in a given community, it depends on continued progress in medicine and health.

Health for all was defined as **the attainment of a level of health that will enable every individual to lead a socially and economically productive life.**

The concept of primary health care involves a concentrated effort to provide the rural populations of developing countries with at least the bare minimum of health services.

Elements (components) of P.H.C:

1-Education concerning prevailing health problems and the methods of preventing and controlling them.

2-Promotion of food supply and proper nutrition.

3-An adequate supply of safe water and basic sanitation.

4-Maternal and child health care including family planning.

5-Immunization against major infectious diseases.

6-Prevention and control of locally endemic diseases.

7- Appropriate treatment of common diseases and injuries.

8- Provision of essential drugs.

Principles of primary health care:

1-Equitable distribution:

The key principle in primary health care strategy is equitable distribution of health services i.e. health services must be shared equally by all people irrespective of their ability to pay and all must have access to health services.

2-Community participation:

There must be continuing effort to secure meaningful involvement of the local community in the planning, implementation and maintenance of health services, besides maximum reliance on local resources such as manpower, money and materials.

3-Focus on preventive and health promotion

The focus of health planners and funding must shift from medical/dental care to prevention and health promotion.

4- Multi-sectoral co-ordination:

P.H.C: involves in addition to the health sector, all related sectors of the community, in particular agriculture, food, industry, education, housing, public works communication and other sectors.

Oral health can be better integrated into general health programs by including oral health in general health education. For example, smoking effects heart disease, respiratory disease and oral disease.

5- Appropriate technology:

This refers to the technology that is scientifically sound, adaptable to the local needs and acceptable to those who apply it and those for whom it is used and that can be maintained by the people themselves in keeping with the principles of self-reliance with the resources the community and country afford. It refers to avoid using of costly equipment, procedures, technique when cheaper scientifically valid and acceptable ones are available.

Atraumatic restorative treatment technique offers a minimal threatening treatment for caries at an early stage and at low cost where electricity is not available.

Primary dental health care:

Dental health may be defined as a state of complete normality and functional efficiency of the teeth and supporting structures and also of the surrounding parts of the oral cavity and of the various structures related to mastication and the maxillofacial complex.

Community dental health services: Are those dental health services which have an educative, preventive or curative nature which organized by governments.

The general goals of dental care are:

1-Dental health promotion.

2-Prevention and treatment of dental diseases.

Primary dental health care offers to whole populations a means of preventing dental diseases and maintaining a mouth with sound teeth and healthy supporting gums and bone throughout major part of each individual's life.

D.H.C. can be considered under four steps these are:

1-Socially:

The community itself must take the principle role in D H C. activities. It is the responsibility of dental profession to teach the people that they should not regard dentistry as simply the provision of services to relieve pain and restore function and appearance but they must be motivated to use preventive measures themselves from birth to old age to keep their teeth in a healthy mouth.

The primary prevention package for oral health should comprise of Oral Health Education. The lectures and audiovisual aids can be imparted to small groups of individuals in the community at regular intervals in different areas of villages.

Each community must primarily be educated about:

1-The benefits of fluoride in reducing dental caries.

2-Various oral hygiene measures for removal of dental plaque.

3-Correct food habits for children (restriction of eating sweet not more than three times a day and not between snacks).

4-Harmful effects of habits such as smoking.

5-Early recognition of precancerous and cancerous lesions (e.g ulcer in the mouth not healing for 2-3 weeks, should consult dentist).

6-The importance of regular visits to the dentist for routine examination.

2-Technically:

Oral health teams must be developed which enable both dentist and auxiliaries to guide their community population towards a desired level of oral and general health through the development of an appropriate primary dental health system.

Dental schools in some countries produce dentists who are also able to render primary oral health care. Dentists or medical doctors with appropriate oral health information should act as leaders of the whole health team.

3-Economically:

Those responsible for dental health care services must develop systems which utilize the resources available to provide a level of dental health care for everyone.

Many countries show that a high proportion of their dental health budget is spent on a small proportion of the population. A sound dental health program in each country must be planned to be equally spread over the entire population.

4- Politically:

Primary dental health care cannot be developed without the full support of national resources.