

INTEGRATING THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMPONENT INTO THE MEDICAL CARE

Clinical medicine is concerned with diagnosing illness, treating disease, promoting health, and relieving pain and distress in individual patients. Public health is concerned with improving the health of populations and reducing inequalities in health [1; 5].

Public health goals can be identified in three main domains:

- Improving services is concerned with the organization and delivery of safe, high quality services for prevention, treatment, and care.
- Health protection is concerned with measures to control infectious disease risks and environmental hazards (such as chemicals, poisons, and radiation), including public health emergencies.
- Health improvement is concerned with societal interventions (e.g. in housing, education, employment, family/community life, and lifestyle) that are not primarily delivered through health services, aimed at preventing disease, promoting health, and reducing inequalities. Effective medical practitioners must be concerned with contributing to each set of goals [4; 5].

The science of public health is therefore concerned with making a diagnosis of a population's health problems, establishing the causes and effects of those problems, and determining effective interventions. The art of public health is to create, advocate for, and use opportunities to implement effective solutions to population health and health care problems [2; 3].

Public health frameworks and principles are best illustrated in the context of everyday clinical practice. Problem-based learning features in the curricula of many medical schools and in some it underpins the whole educational system. More evidence is required as to the effectiveness of different approaches to public health education. Attachments/visits to individual families, primary care trusts, school health clinics, prisons, and other relevant institutions can heighten understanding of public health in practice. Most importantly, public health education needs to be participative and delivered enthusiastically [5].

REFERENCES

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