

Introduction to Global Health

What is “Health”?

“Is the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1948) and the “extent to which an individual or group is able to realize aspirations and satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment. Health is a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living; it is a positive concept, emphasizing social and personal resources as well as physical capabilities” (WHO, 1984).

Public Health

Refers to all organized measures (whether public or private) to prevent disease, promote health, and prolong life among the population as a whole. Its activities aim to provide conditions in which people can be healthy and focus on entire populations, not on individual patients or diseases. Thus, public health is concerned with the total system and not only the eradication of a particular disease.

The three main public health functions are:

- The assessment and monitoring of the health of communities and populations at risk to identify health problems and priorities.
- The formulation of public policies designed to solve identified local and national health problems and priorities.
- To assure that all populations have access to appropriate and cost-effective care, including health promotion and disease prevention services.

Globalization

*“Globalisation can be defined as the
“widening, deepening and speeding up of
worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of
contemporary social life”.*

(Held,et al 1999)

The term global public health

- Recognizes that, as a result of globalization, forces that affect public health can and do come from outside state boundaries and that responding to public health issues now requires attention to cross-border health risks, including access to dangerous products and environmental change.

Global Health Definition

- Health problems, issues, and concerns that transcend national boundaries, which may be influenced by circumstances or experiences in other countries, and which are best addressed by cooperative actions and solutions (Institute Of Medicine, USA- 1997)
- Examples include infectious diseases (SARS, TB, avian influenza, malaria,) non infectious diseases (diabetes mellitus, tobacco related diseases) and other health risks (global warming, conflict, nuclear power) etc.

Working Definition of 'Global Health' Koplan et al, 2009

“Global health is an area for study, research, and practice that places a priority on improving health and achieving equity in health for all people worldwide. Global health emphasizes transnational health issues, determinants, and solutions; involves many disciplines within and beyond the health sciences and promotes interdisciplinary collaboration; and is a synthesis of population- based prevention with individual-level clinical care.”

What is Global Health

- **Global Health is collaborative trans-national research and action for promoting health for all.**
- **Global Health is health issues that transcend national boundaries and governments and call for actions on the global forces that determine the health of people.**
- **Global health is worldwide improvement of health, reduction of disparities, and protecting against global threats that disregard national borders.**
- **Global Health is “An area of study, research, and practice that places priority on improving health and achieving equity in health for all people worldwide”**

Communicable Diseases and Risk Factors

- Infectious diseases are communicable
- But..
- so are elements of western lifestyles:
 - Dietary changes
 - Lack of physical activity
 - Reliance on automobile transport
 - Smoking
 - Stress
 - Urbanisation

Globalization



Global Health Issues

- Refers to any health issue that concerns many countries or is affected by transnational determinants such as:
 - Climate change
 - Urbanisation
 - Malnutrition – under or over nutrition

Or solutions that are of transnational concerns such as:

- Polio eradication
- Containment of avian influenza
- Approaches to tobacco control

Many disciplines are involved in Global Health

- Social sciences
- Behavioural sciences
- Law
- Human rights
- Ethics
- Economics
- Politics
- Finance
- History
- Environmental sciences
- Biomedical sciences
- Health services management
- Health Systems and policy
- Public health sciences
- Epidemiology
- Research
- Engineering
- And many other disciplines

Key Concepts in Relation to Global Health

1. The determinants of health
2. Health Indicators that measure health status
3. The global burden of disease
4. The importance of culture and context in health
5. The key risk factors for various health problems
6. The organisation and function of health systems