

21ST CENTURY HEALTH CHALLENGES

Can the essential public health functions make a difference?

Discussion Paper



21st century health challenges: can the essential public health functions make a difference?

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Acronyms

| | |
|------------|--|
| AMR | antimicrobial resistance |
| COVID-19 | coronavirus disease |
| EPHF | essential public health function |
| EPHO | essential public health operation |
| EPHS | essential public health service |
| FCV | fragile, conflict-affected and vulnerable |
| GPW 13 | WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023 |
| IANPHI | International Association of National Public Health Institutes |
| IHR (2005) | International Health Regulations (2005) |
| M&E | monitoring and evaluation |
| NPHI | national public health institute |
| PHC | Primary Health Care |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| UHC | universal health coverage |
| WFPHA | World Federation of Public Health Associations |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

Glossary

The use of terms in this paper follows the description defined in this section. It is acknowledged that there are usually no widely agreed definitions of these terms and no unified way of applying them in the public health remit. The descriptions below are adapted from various sources, which are listed following each term. The definition of other terms can be found in the WHO publication Essential public health functions, health systems and health security – developing conceptual clarity and a WHO roadmap for action (1).

Clinical care

Clinical care refers to efforts to examine, maintain and restore patients' physical and mental well-being. Clinical care usually involves, among other elements, examination, medical treatment and palliative care. Clinical care is usually provided in health facilities by professionals.

Community health worker

Community health workers are persons who provide health and medical care for members of their local community, often in partnership with health professionals; alternatively known as village health worker, community health aide or promoter, health educator, lay health adviser, expert patient, community volunteer or some other term (2).

Essential public health functions

Essential public health functions are usually seen as a list of minimum requirements for countries to ensure public health.

Health

Health refers to the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (3).

Health inequities

Health inequities refer to systematic and avoidable differences in health outcomes between population groups.

Health services

Health services refer to activities – any service (i.e. not limited to medical or clinical services) aimed at contributing to improved health or to the diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of sick people (4).

Health system

The health system comprises all the organizations, institutions, people, resources and actions whose primary purpose is to improve, restore or maintain health. The goals of a health system are improving health and health equity in ways that are responsive, financially fair and make the best or most efficient use of available resources. Six health system building blocks together constitute a complete health system – health service delivery; health workforce; health information; medical technologies; health financing; leadership and governance (5, 6, 7, 8).

Health systems strengthening

Health systems strengthening refers to (i) the process of identifying and implementing the changes in policy and practice in a country's health system, so that the country can respond better to its health and health system challenges; and (ii) any array of initiatives and strategies that improves one or more of the functions of the health system and that leads to better health through improvements in access, coverage, quality or efficiency. Health systems strengthening interventions refer to the activities improving six health system building blocks and managing their interactions in ways that achieve more equitable and sustained improvements across health services and health outcomes (4, 8).

Health workforce

Health workforce refers to all people engaged in actions whose primary intent is to enhance health. Health workforce includes those front-line health professionals who provide health services (such as doctors, nurses, physicians, midwives, pharmacists, lay health workers and community health workers) and those who support the health services (such as hospital managers, ambulance drivers and allied health professionals) (9, 10, 11).

Integrated health services

Integrated health services refer to the management and delivery of health services so that people receive a continuum of health promotion, disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment, disease management, rehabilitation and palliative care services through the different functions, activities and sites of care within the health system (2).

Personal health services/Individual-based health services

Personal health services refer to health services targeted at the individual. These include, among others, promotion of individual health, timely disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment, rehabilitation, palliative care, acute care and long-term care services (4).

Population health

Population health refers to health outcomes distributed within a defined group of individuals.

Population health services/population-based health services

Population health services refer to health services targeted at the population as a whole with the aim to improve health and well-being on a large scale (2).

Public health

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