The Link between Health and Behavior

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The US Department of Health and Human Services developed the Healthy People framework to promote people’s health. The federal government revises this framework every ten years by including factors affecting health based on the trends in society. As seen with Healthy People 2020, social determinants of health such as the availability of job opportunities, social disorder, climate change, high health care costs affect people’s health (HealthyPeople.gov, 2020). The shifting paradigm of health requires one to understanding the link between health and behavior. Getting enlightened about the relationship can reveal how this affects social determinants of health.

The changes in healthcare needs have pushed governments to identify strategic ways to promote sustainable environments and encourage healthy behaviors. De Angulo and Losada (2015) inform that the modern western world has experienced shifts in the paradigms governing medicine and human health. Previously, the global health paradigm focused on epidemic control in all countries where governments acted as the main health actors. However, the international communities viewed this paradigm as excessively reductionist. The paradigm shift has transformed where the focus is more on comprehending the health-disease process rather than viewing health as a biological and organic issue.

Addressing health care needs is an aspect that Hunter (2008) emphasizes since focusing on achieving sustainable health. While addressing health care needs, health professionals and advocates of health gain insight into behaviors impacting health. According to Conner and Norman (2017), behaviors such as smoking, alcohol use, physical activity, sexual activity, and eating behaviors influence health outcomes. For example, smoking behavior can lead to liver problems, and alcohol use can contribute to mental health problems. Further findings show that demographic elements such as socio-economic status and gender influence smoking behavior and physical activity among populations (Conner & Norman, 2017). Change in the negative behavioral patterns into healthy activities like going for physician visits, screening and vaccination may lead to health maintenance, restoration, and improvement. Therefore, activities that people engage in determine how they are likely to improve or worsen their health state.

As Conner and Norman (2017) illustrate, the relationship between behavior and health affects the social determinants of health. In this sense, increased alcohol use falls under the social determinants of health which place the victims in situations that negatively impact their wellbeing. Exposure to crime and social disorder, lack of job opportunities, and living wages to support livelihood are among the social determinants of health that influence people to indulge in substance abuse. Poor health outcomes among such victims of substance abuse may result from the lack of insurance coverage and high health costs preventing them from seeking medical assistance when ill. According to HealthyPeople.gov (2020), individual behavior plays a significant role in reducing the rate of health risks such as liver cirrhosis and lung cancer caused by excessive alcohol consumption. Therefore, the link between health and behavior goes a long way in unveiling determinants of health, whether personal, social, environmental, and economic aspects that impact health.

In sum, health advocates, policymakers, and populations should recognize that identifying the population's needs influences the actions required to improve health. Acknowledging the social factors such as enhancing food availability, social support, public safety, and increased health access can promote positive healthcare outcomes in society. The changing patterns in healthcare require a constant reinvention of strategies to promote health.

References

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