

Determinants and Behavioral Health

A further set of variables in our conceptual frame work must be considered- the factors that influence health positively or negatively.

Four contributing elements were identified:

1. Human biological factors, those physiological defences and vulnerabilities that influence who is at risk.
2. Environmental factors, any external agents or conditions capable of enhancing or inhibiting health.
3. Adequacies and inadequacies of the health care system, the medical – technological, organizational determinants.
4. Psycho-social and cultural factors, such as behaviors and life-styles that influence health.

The factors that influence health lie both in the individual and externally in the society in which he or she lives.

It is a combination of two sets of factors the genetic and the environmental, to which man is exposed. The factors constantly interact and these interactions may be health promoting or disease producing.

The following six factors either positively or negatively influence the health of human being.

1. Personal factors (Heredity and personal hygiene)

Heredity:

The physical and mental traits of every human being are determined by the nature of his genes at the moment of conception. A number of diseases are known to be of genetic in origin. e.g. sickle cell anemia, mental retardation etc.

Personal hygiene:

Physical health is an important component of total health. It includes maintaining cleanliness of different parts of the body.

2. Environmental Factors

Environmental factors can be classified as Internal and External.

- a. **Internal environment** refers to the part of body tissues, organs, systems, and its harmonious functioning within the body.

b. External environment:

External environment refers to all those things which surround man. It includes physical, biological, and psycho-social components.

Importance of Environmental Health- It is important to maintain environmental health for the following reasons:

- Most of the ill health is due to poor environmental health e.g. unsafe drinking water, polluted soil, poor housing, insects and rodents air pollution in cities etc. cause a major problem to health of the people.
- The high death-rate, infant mortality rate, sickness rate, and poor standards of living are due to defective environmental sanitation.
- Growing industrialization and automobiles on the road pose air pollution and diseases of respiratory system.
- Increasing growth of pollution is another factor rendering environmental pollution.
- Urbanization and overcrowding is yet another major concern.

Components of Environmental Health-

- Safe water supply
- Basic sanitation and waste disposal
- Food safety
- Housing, ventilation and pure air
- Vector control
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3. Socio economic factors

Socioeconomic conditions are known to influence health. Some of the factors influencing socioeconomic development are per capita income, education, nutrition, employment, housing and the political system of the country.

4. Cultural factors

Culture is a complex integrated system that includes knowledge, beliefs, skills, arts, morals, taboos, customs habits, roles attitudes, life styles etc..all these provide a pattern for living together.

5. Health services

Health services imply a broad spectrum of services including primary health care, integration of preventive and therapeutics services, health education, protection of mother and children, family spacing and control of environmental hazards. The purpose is to improve the health status of population. E.g. Immunization of children can reduce the incidence and prevalence of particular diseases from water borne diseases.

6. Other factors/Health Related Systems

Other contributions to the health of population derive from systems outside the formal health care system e.g. health related systems like food and agriculture, education, industry, social welfare, women welfare organizations etc..