

# THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE

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# INTRODUCTION

- It is generally accepted that the most important determinants of health consist of the basic conditions of daily life that promote health and wellbeing.
- Poverty of the poorest 3 billion of the world's population who live on less than \$2 a day means that they do not have access to basic needs such as - adequate food for their children, clean water, safe housing, education and quality healthcare

# INTRODUCTION

(Cont'd)

- As a result this same families have infants who die at rates 15-20 times that of wealthy population and mothers who are 80-100 equally likely to die in child birth.
- In a community, about 80% of the population experience at any given time an episode of poor health, while 1 in 10 of them will consult a general practitioner, 90% of the individuals with a health problem would be found outside the formal healthcare system. Such individuals will resort to selfcare, traditional practioners and other means of healthcare. (Green et al, 2001)

# INTRODUCTION (Cont'd)

- Existing evidence requires that a structured health delivery system has to be put in place to provide healthcare to this vast population that is out of the control of the formal health system.
- Some university programs do not respond to the community needs and as such do not have an impact on the community. Modern programs should also include the community perspectives.

# OBJECTIVES

The aim of this paper is to

1. Identify the various community healthcare roles that higher education/universities can play to improve the health of the community
2. Identify the strategies that can be put in place to achieve the various roles identified above
3. Identify challenges and obstacles to achieving these roles of better health for communities
4. To make recommendations for achieving and sustaining healthcare for communities

# CONTRIBUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO SUSTIANABLE HEALTH DEVELOPMENT (ROLES)

- Training of Health experts of various disciplines
- Health Services Delivery
  - Primary healthcare
- Capacity building
  - Building the capacities of communities and educational institutions to engage each other as partners
  - Create learning opportunities which foster the equitable exchange of ideas and knowledge between the community and the university.

# CONTRIBUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO SUSTIANABLE HEALTH DEVELOPMENT (Cont'd)

- Research
  - Research aimed at identifying the causes, treatment and prevention of diseases in the community.
  - Research that aims at changing and encouraging healthy lifestyles
  - Research aimed at improving the health policy process.
  - Research aimed at identifying new technologies for diagnosing and treating current, emergent and re-emergent diseases



# CONTRIBUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO SUSTIANABLE HEALTH DEVELOPMENT (Cont'd)

- Information clearing house
  - Publications, journals, pamphlets, brochures, magazines, text etc on current health problems , management and prevention which could be used by the community.
  - Member listerv
  - Annual conferences
  - Workshops

# STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE HEALTH DEVELOPMENT IN COMMUNITIES

- Carry out a community diagnoses and community health needs assessment
- Focus group discussions on key health issues aimed as correcting false health beliefs related to diseases causation, treatment and prevention.
- Shifting curriculum from content-based to case-based and community-based curriculum

# STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE HEALTH DEVELOPMENT IN COMMUNITIES (Cont'd)

- Introducing innovative teaching methods
  - Problem-based Learning and community oriented/community-based extension services (COBES) methodology to train healthcare professionals
  - Incorporating service learning into the education of all health professionals
- Building partnerships with other institutions

# STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE HEALTH DEVELOPMENT IN COMMUNITIES (Cont'd)

- Building the capacities of the communities and educational institutions to engage each other as partners
- Recognizing and rewarding faculty staff for community-based teaching, research and health services.
- Building partnerships with the communities

# CHALLENGES

- Health pluralism
  - Varied and unhealthy health belief patterns of communities.
- Inadequate access to quality health services
  - Poorly developed infrastructure
  - Inequality in health service provision
  - Poor resource allocation to the health sector
  - Poverty
  - Illiteracy
  - HIV/AIDS pandemic and other re-emerging diseases
  - Inadequate access for the poor to essential drugs

# CHALLENGES (cont'd)

- Inadequate manpower resources
- Inadequate access to clean drinking water, electricity, poorly developed communication infrastructure (telephones) and poor road infrastructure

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Health education of the population on prevalent diseases on their causes, treatment and prevention
- The initial planning phase of the university should consider ways of improving on the overall access to quality health services
- Integrating other faculties of the university that carryout health related work such as those engaging communities in wealth creating activities
- Introducing alternative/innovating health financing activities such as Mutual health insurance schemes e.g. (BEPHA)

# RECOMMENDATIONS (Cont'd)

- Training health professionals who will be self-enterprising (professionalizing higher education)
- Organizing business forums focusing on healthcare.
- Reduce brain-drain by creating attractive working conditions for trained health professionals
- Improve on the management of the essential drug supply system.



# CONCLUSION

The presence of any given university in community should benefit the community as well as the university benefiting from the community. Developing a sustainable healthcare system for a community is quite challenging, however with good insights into the community perspectives on the roles of higher education in their collective welfare and the university's perspective on community perspective on healthcare will help us overcome the challenges. This can be achieved by building effective partnerships between the community and the university.



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