Public health is the science of the health of groups of people. The population in question can be as small as a handful of people or as large as all the inhabitants of several continents (for instance, in the case of a pandemic). Public health has many sub-fields, but is typically divided into the categories of epidemiology (which studies the spread of disease), biostatistics (the study of who is sick and why) and health services. Environmental, social and behavioral health, and occupational health, are also important fields in public health. ...more from A Short History of Public Health in Richer Countries

Public health deals primarily with:

1. Preventive rather than curative aspects of health. However, treating a disease may be vital to preventing its spread, during an outbreak of an infectious disease.

Contents

1 Prevention
2 Global public health
3 History of public health
4 Creating a healthy city
5 Public health programs and organizations
6 Notes
7 Interwiki links

Prevention

Prevent is through disease surveillance, the promotion of healthy behaviors (e.g. hand washing, vaccination, discouraging smoking, distribution of condoms and AIDS prevention education programs), sanitation and the availability of adequate clean water.

Global public health

Diseases related to poverty or lack of health infrastructure are the particular focus of "global public health" or "international public health", which can be studied as a Masters degree at many universities. Materials are also available freely on OpenCourseWare.[1]

History of public health

From the beginnings of human civilization, it was recognized at least by some cultures that polluted water and lack of proper waste disposal spread disease, hence early cleanliness laws such as those in Judaism, and the practices of Ancient Rome. [verification needed]
Responses to epidemics such as the 14th century Black Death in Europe, and 19th century cholera epidemics, were often ineffective, missing the key influences and even making things worse. For example, dogs and cats were expelled from slums during a Black Death plague in London, [verification needed] which allowed rats to spread further, carrying fleas with the plague. This emphasizes the importance of an understanding of the science in taking effective action in public health.

See also A short history of public health in richer countries.

Creating a healthy city

The term "healthy city" is used by public health advocates today for the goal of collective physical well-being in the face of the challenges of crowded conditions and urbanization.

Air pollution is believed to have a significant negative impact on health, especially on those with asthma and other respiratory problems.

Health in an urban population is supported by a well-planned sustainable city, with good sanitation, a relatively natural water cycle, access to healthy food, alternatives to car use and many opportunities for exercise as part of daily life.

Public health programs and organizations

The World Health Organization plays a leading role globally. Nations generally have their own government departments and/or agencies dedicated either to public health, or combined into a more general health department. The United States' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Animal health can also impact on human public health, as in cases of bird flu and swine flu. (See also Vector control).

Notes

1. Note for example Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health OpenCourseWare (OCW) project

Interwiki links

- Wikipedia:Public health