

The Scope of Community Medicine

Seyed Mohsen Seyednozadi¹, Mercedes Shahraki², and Maliheh Dadgarmoghaddam^{3,*}

¹ Professor of Community Medicine, Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad, Iran

² Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad, Iran

³ Assistant Professor of Community Medicine, Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad, Iran

* **Corresponding author:** Maliheh Dadgarmoghaddam, Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad, Iran. Email: maliheh_dadgar@yahoo.com

Received 2017 February 19; Accepted 2017 October 07.

Keywords: Care, Community, Community Medicine, Health

According to the world health organization (WHO) definition, "The health is a state of total physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (1). What is the best way to make the community healthier?

The role of community medicine specialist is not clear and well defined. John Ryle established the first institute of community medicine at the University of Oxford in 1943.

Ryle thought that community medicine is not a synonym for public health because of some reasons. First, public health focused on the environment but community medicine study a person in relation to his environment. A second difference is that the scope of community medicine was wider. Theoretical knowledge is not enough for disease management in community; we must have a feasible and available health care delivery system, that community medicine specialists provides best health systems for each community (2).

And finally, the community medicine united the clinical with the public (3). A community medicine physician is a healthcare professional who has a holistic perspective toward the community based on the three specialized preventative levels of community medicine (healthy, diseased and disabled); this is due to the fact that human health is influenced by several social, economic, cultural and lifestyle factors in addition to health-related personal parameters. As such, community medicine encompasses a wide variety of specialized activities, imposing a great responsibility on the physicians (4).

On the other hand, the "iceberg phenomenon" shows that many influential factors in human health remain unclear and healthy individuals are not distinguished properly from patients in the latent stages of a disease. Furthermore, community physicians often operate in the hidden stages of diseases in the community, which detracts attention from their endeavors and these groups of

professionals are neglected even by the officials and policy makers.

Today, we do not believe in the fact that prevention is better than cure, because of the early detection and treatment are also considered as a measure of prevention (i.e., secondary prevention). Therefore, if preserving the health of individuals is not possible initially, the next stage of healthcare might revolve around the early diagnosis and treatment of the disease (secondary prevention).

The process of care encompasses health services before the development of the disease, treatment, and healthcare services after the occurrence of the disease, even during the disabled stage (care not only cure). Moreover, the concept of "self-care" has been recognized as an important determinant of human health, which focuses on aspects such as healthy lifestyle through increasing physical activity, proper nutrition, avoidance of smoking and narcotics, safe sexual behaviors, and reduced violence.

It is also noteworthy that self-care behaviors do not only represent physical health care, but rather the care of oneself in thoughts, speech and actions, which account for the mental health of an individual.

In conclusion, the community medicine mission is making a healthier community for human beings. Community medicine provides comprehensive health services ranging from promotive, preventive, and curative to rehabilitative services.

References

1. Park K. Parks textbook of preventive and social medicine. 18th ed. Jabalpur: Banarsidas Bhanot; 2005.
2. Chaturvedi SK. Importance of community medicine; 2015. Available from: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/importance-community-medicine-dr-shyam-k-chaturvedi>.
3. Horton R. Public health or social medicine? It matters. *Lancet*. 2013;382:S1. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(13)62427-7.
4. Kumar R. Development of the community medicine sub specialties. *Indian J Community Med*. 2005;30(2):43.