Promoting Healthy Lifestyles in the Developing World

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Learning Objectives

1. Understand Health Promotion in context: the developing world

1. Understand the determinants of health related with life styles in developing countries

2. Understand the strategy of empowerment and the importance of environment and social factors
Outline

I. Understanding the Global Context: The Population Approach
II. Understanding Health Promotion in Developing Countries
III. Understanding the Determinants of Health in Developing Countries
IV. The Strategy for Healthy Lifestyles: Local Empowerment and Global Environmental and Policy Changes
V. Conclusions
I. Understanding the Global Context

The Population Approach
.... Emerging challenges

- Population aging
- Changes in lifestyle
- Urbanization
- Information revolution
- Deterioration of social structures and support systems
- Climate change and natural disasters
- Environmental degradation
Poverty and Chronic Diseases

- 80% of chronic disease deaths occur in low and middle income countries – where most of the world’s population lives.
- The impact of this invisible epidemic is steadily growing.
- Chronic diseases and poverty are locked together in a vicious cycle.
- Chronic disease hinders economic development and worsens poverty.
- The poor are also more vulnerable, having more exposure to risks and less access to health services.
Amount and Patterns of Burden of Disease in Developing and Developed Countries

Same reference for the next three slides.
Global Distribution of Burden of Disease Attributable to 20 Leading Risk Factors
Leading 10 Selected Risk Factors as Percentage of Causes of Disease Burden Measured in DALYs

<table>
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<tr>
<th>High mortality countries</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underweight</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unsafe sex</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indoor smoke from solid fuels</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zinc deficiency</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iron deficiency</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vitamin A deficiency</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blood pressure</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cholesterol</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low mortality countries</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Tobacco</td>
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<tr>
<td>Underweight</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cholesterol</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indoor smoke from solid fuels</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low fruit and vegetable intake</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron deficiency</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Top Ten Leading Risk Factors

1. Underweight
2. Unsafe sex
3. High blood pressure
4. Tobacco consumption
5. Alcohol consumption
6. Unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene
7. Iron deficiency
8. Indoor smoke from solid fuels
9. High cholesterol
10. Obesity
WHO Resolution

‘A national policy framework taking into account healthy public policies creating a conducive environment for healthy lifestyles; fiscal and taxation policies towards healthy and unhealthy goods and services; to establish programmes for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases; to assess and monitor mortality and morbidity attributable to non-communicable disease; and to promote the effectiveness of secondary and tertiary prevention and support the development of guidelines of cost-effective screening, diagnosis and treatment for NCDs.’

53rd World Health Assembly
Determinants of success

- Surveillance systems to monitor health status and changes
- Integration into existing health care systems
- Enough level of funding
- A ‘population approach’, that is, focused on communities and not just patients or individuals
- Context-appropriate health research that takes place in developing countries
- Recognizing the differences among developing countries
- Global framework and partnerships
Lifestyles and Health

• There is convincing evidence that lack of exercise, a diet high in fat and cholesterol, stress, smoking, obesity, alcohol and drug abuse, and exposure to chemical pollutants all can cause serious health problems.

• But, as lifestyles reflect both individual choice and the norms and values of a particular group or community, promotion of healthy lifestyles should be directed to both the individual and the community.
Risk Control Approach

• Risks do not occur in isolation, so both proximal and distal causes of adverse health outcomes need to be considered.

• Population-based strategies aim to make healthy behavior and reduce exposures a social norm, thus lowering risk in the entire population.

• Small shifts in some risks in the population can translate into major public health benefits.
Causal Chains of Exposure Leading to Disease

The Strategy of Preventive Medicine

• A large number of people exposed to a small risk generate many more cases than a small number exposed to high risk.

• A preventive strategy focusing on high-risk individuals will deal only with the margin of the problem and will not have any impact on the large proportion of disease occurring in the large proportion of people who are at moderate risk.

• Population-based strategies that seek to shift the whole distribution of risk factors have the potential to control population incidence.

• These approaches are complementary: a key challenge is finding the right balance between population-wide and high-risk approaches.
II. Understanding Health Promotion in Developing Countries
Health Promotion: Concept

• Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve their health.

• Health promotion represents a comprehensive social and political process, it not only embraces actions directed at strengthening the skills and capabilities of individuals, but also action directed towards changing social, environmental and economic conditions so as to alleviate their impact on public and individual health.
Health Promotion: A Process

• Health promotion is described as a “process”, indicating that it is a means to an end, and not an outcome in its own right. Health promotion is an activity directed towards enabling people to take action. Thus, health promotion is not something that is done on or to people, it is done with people, either as individuals or as groups. Participation and partnership are valued processes in health promotion.

Nutbeam D. Evaluating health promotion – progress, problems and solutions”

Health Promot Int; 1998;13: 27-44
Health Promotion: Not Limited

- Health promotion strategies are not limited to a specific health problem, nor to a specific set of behaviors.

- Health promotion, and the associated efforts put into education, community development, policy, legislation and regulation, are equally valid for prevention of communicable diseases, injury and violence, and mental problems, as they are for prevention of non-communicable diseases (variety of population groups, risk factors, diseases, and in various settings).

WHO (http://www.who.int/healthpromotion/en/)
The Ottawa Charter: Strategies

- The **Ottawa Charter** identifies three basic strategies for health promotion:
  - *advocacy* for health to create the essential conditions for health indicated previously;
  - *enabling* all people to achieve their full health potential; and
  - *mediating* between the different interests in society in the pursuit of health.

“The Jakarta Declaration on Leading Health Promotion into the 21st Century” (1997)
The Ottawa Charter: Actions

• These strategies are supported by five priority action areas:
  – Build *healthy public policy*
  – Create *supportive environments for health*
  – Strengthen *community action for health*
  – Develop *personal skills, and*
  – Re-orient health services
• Developing *personal skills* is essential to *adopting healthy life styles*, but…
Interventions focuses in develop a plan for implementing healthy lifestyle activities

Results: Specific strategies were suggested to increase awareness, to provide health education, and to improve environmental support.

Lifestyles: Not Only Individual Options

• Improving the capacity of communities for health promotion requires practical education, leadership training and **access to resources**.

• Empowering individuals demands consistent, reliable access to the decision-making process and the skills and knowledge essential to effect change.
III. Understanding Determinants of Health in Developing Countries
The Determinants of Health: Concept


“Until now, most of society’s efforts to improve health, and the bulk of direct health expenditures, has been focused on the health care organization. Yet, when we identify the main cause of sickness and death, we find that they are rooted in the other three elements of the concept.”

Lalonde M. A New Perspective on the Health of Canadians. Ottawa, 1974
The Determinants of Health

• The social and economic environment

• The physical environment

• The person’s individual characteristics and behaviors
The Broad Determinants of Health

• The context of people’s lives determine their health, and so blaming individuals for having poor health or crediting them for good health is inappropriate.

• Individuals are unlikely to be able to directly control many of the determinants of health.

• These determinants—or things that make people healthy or not—include the above factors, and many others:
  – Income and social status
  – Education
  – Physical environment
  – Social support networks
  – Genetics
  – Health services
  – Gender
In Developing Countries...

- Both relative and absolute poverty create vulnerability to disease as the poor are particularly susceptible to poor sanitation and nutrition, inadequate public health infrastructure, human rights violations, hunger and psychosocial stressors from powerlessness and despair.
Best Alternatives for Health Promotion

Morbidity and mortality burdens as well as the present social and economic situation, indicate the best public policies related to health promotion today in developing countries:

– Housing
– Basic Sanitation: water, sewage systems and solid waste
– Food safety; food and nutrition policies
– Education: universal access to basic education
– Guaranteeing minimum income
Living Conditions

• The everyday environment of people, where they live, play and work.

• Are a product of social and economic circumstances and the physical environment – all of which can impact upon *health* – and are largely outside of the immediate control of the individual.

• In developing countries, this is the greatest determinant of health.
Living Conditions in the Developing World
IV. The Strategy for Healthy Lifestyles: Local Empowerment and Global Environmental and Policy Changes
Health Education

• Health education comprises consciously constructed opportunities for learning involving some form of communication designed to improve health literacy, including improving knowledge, and developing life skills which are conducive to individual and community health.

Source: Health Promotion Glossary. WHO Division of Health Promotion, Education and Communications (HPR) 1998.
Health Behavior

• Any activity undertaken by an individual, regardless of actual or perceived health status, for the purpose of promoting, protecting or maintaining health, whether or not such behavior is objectively effective towards that end.

Source: Health Promotion Glossary. WHO Division of Health Promotion, Education and Communications (HPR) 1998.
Lifestyle

- Is a way of living based on identifiable patterns of behavior which are determined by the interplay between an individual’s personal characteristics, social interactions, and socioeconomic and environmental living conditions.

Source: Health Promotion Glossary. WHO Division of Health Promotion, Education and Communications (HPR) 1998.
Healthy Lifestyles

• Refers to basic human functions and the patterns linking various activities of everyday living.
• Behaviors and social practices conducive to good health that are adopted by individuals, but reflect the values and identities of the groups and societies in which they live.
• Promoting healthy lifestyles involves enhancing individual responsibility and capability as well as enabling environments.
• Determinants of health strongly influence lifestyles.
• To enjoy healthy lifestyles, people require knowledge and skills combined with an environment that makes healthy choices possible throughout their lives.
Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

- Identify key target groups
- Political commitment
- Best evidence-based practices
- Global partnerships
- Vulnerable populations such as mobile populations, youth, the elderly, for example.
• In Developing Countries, the Strategy for Promoting Healthy Lifestyles is Empowerment...
Empowerment

- A process through which people gain greater control over decisions and actions affecting their health.
Community Empowerment

• Has roots in community psychology, health education and health promotion, liberatory adult education, community organizing, rural and community development, and social work (Wallerstein, N)

• A social action process by which individuals, communities, and organizations gain mastery over their lives in the context of changing their social and political environment to improve equity and quality of life (Rappaport J).
Effective Empowerment Strategies

• Increasing citizens’ skills, control over resources and access to information relevant to public health development;

• Using small group efforts, which enhance critical consciousness on public health issues, to build supportive environments and a deeper sense of community;

• Promoting community action through collective involvement in decision-making and participation in all phases of public health planning, implementation and evaluation, use of lay helpers and leaders, advocacy and leadership training and organizational capacity development;

Source: What is the evidence on effectiveness of empowerment to improve health? WHO Regional Office for Europe’s Health Evidence Network. 2006
Effective Empowerment Strategies

• Strengthening healthy public policy by organizational and inter-organizational actions, transfer of power and decision-making authority to participants of interventions, and promotion of governmental and institutional accountability and transparency; and

• Being sensitive to the health care needs defined by community members themselves.
Global Environmental and Policy Changes

- Health services
- Healthy settings
- Surveillance and research and development
- Packages of priority interventions
- Good practice models
To Strengthen Cooperation to Promote Healthy Lifestyle

• Providing forums for high-level policy dialogues

• Developing regional strategies

• Expanding networks and opportunities to exchange expertise and lessons learned
To Strengthen the Capacity for Research and Policy Development, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

• Introducing innovative approaches to leveraging and mobilizing funding and resources for country and region-wide programs
• Creating programs and partnerships that build the technical and advocacy capacity of officers responsible for promoting healthy lifestyles
• Accessing increased technical assistance in priority areas influencing lifestyles to benefit the population
To Enhance Awareness and Develop Health Literacy Among Peoples about Healthy Lifestyles

- Introducing joint initiatives with the media/broadcasting industry to mobilize the population to enhance knowledge, skills and environments required for healthy lifestyles.
- Strengthening the contribution of health services, schools and workplaces to educate on healthy behaviors.
To Work Together to Build Supportive Environments and Opportunities for Healthy Lifestyles Choices

• Strengthening policy processes to secure short and long term investments that improve living and working conditions and resources for healthy lifestyles
• Establishing multi-sector engagement to secure the determinants of healthy lifestyles
• Establishing dialogues between national governments, non-government organizations and citizen groups to identify priority areas and opportunities for action on lifestyles
V. Conclusions
Promoting Healthy Lifestyles: Principles

• Should be concrete and tangible and be linked with specific health problems. It should not be done in isolation. Therefore, integrated control of a group of risk factors in regard to many diseases should be adopted, always taking into account the environmental factors.
Promoting Healthy Lifestyles: Individuals

- At the individual level, life skill education should be stressed, especially in schools. Decision-making, problem solving, creative and critical thinking, building up a positive self-image, expressing empathy and coping with peer pressure are of critical importance.
Promoting Healthy Lifestyles: Society

• In the immediate environment such as the family, schools, peer-group and community, it is important to provide a range of alternative positive behavioral choices for individuals to select from, and to support the individual with positive reinforcement.
Promoting Healthy Lifestyles: Public Policy

• At the national level, it is critical to advocate the development of strong policies and clear strategies on national health programs.

• These should include measures by the government to provide socio-economic, cultural and legal environments that favor positive support for the adoption of healthy lifestyles by individuals.
Priorities for Research on the Determinants of Health in Developing Countries

• Measurement: tools for management and monitoring
• Increasing health system responsiveness
• Characterization of social determinants (social cohesion, social capital, discrimination, inequality)
• Characterization of intermediate determinants and interactions (psychosocial, environmental, occupational, education)
• Program evaluation and characterization of best practices and strategies
• Health Impact Assessment of public policies and interventions in other sectors
Requisites for Effectiveness

A. Inter-disciplinarity
B. Involvement
C. Cultural competence
D. Comprehensiveness
E. Social participation
F. Inter-sectoriality
G. Strengthening local management
Requisites for Effectiveness

I. Political commitment
II. Framework for action
III. Strategy for action
IV. Program for action
V. Commitment to cooperate
VI. Stakeholders for action
Essentials for Success

• Awareness that a problem exists
• Understanding of its causes
• Capability to tackle those causes
• A sense of values that makes it clear that the problem matters
• A political will to take the necessary action
Summary

- Healthy lifestyles should be promoted both addressing the whole population and also focusing on high-risk groups.
- Promoting healthy lifestyles requires changing socio-environmental conditions within which health can thrive.
- Empowerment, as a social action process by which individuals, communities, and organizations gain mastery over their lives in the context of changing their socio-political environment is essential for promoting healthy lifestyles.
- Health promotion seeks to promote conditions supportive of health improvement and for this reason, both the developed and developing countries must co-operate.
- The problems can only be solved if there is concerted action between the social, professional, political and academic levels.
«Our scientific view of the universe should be as simple as possible, but not more simple than that.»

A. Einstein
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Credits

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