

Public Health in the United States

United States is one of the leading countries in the aspect of public health. Public health initiatives promote health and prevent diseases through the organized efforts and well-informed choices of communities, organizations and individuals. This paper discusses some important aspects of public health. It attempts to differentiate the term public health significance from personal health. It also covers one important aspect from the list of *essential public health services*. Finally the paper discusses one of the most important achievements from the *Ten Great Public Health Achievements* resulted in the greatest reduction in morbidity and mortality in the United states.

The concept of public health deals with treatment and prevention of diseases pertaining to a community or the whole nation. It includes health awareness programs and disease prevention measures conducted by government or non-governmental organizations in different domains of public life. Public health significance is a term used to denote the diseases or health issues that are not common in a specific community, a state or in the country itself. It includes rare diseases and communicable diseases that can be a cause of general public health concern. For example, in Washington, Rocky Mountain Spotted fever, viral hemorrhagic fevers, and other tick borne diseases are included in the rare diseases of public health significance. ("Rare disease of public health significance," 2011). Public health significance is a term related to the public health while personal health is all about individual health care. The important aspects of personal health includes leading a healthy life style, maintaining personal hygiene, regular health check-up and to keep in touch with health care professionals etc.

The *National Public Health Performance Standards Program* (NPHPSP) provides assessable performance standards. Public health systems can make use of these standards to ensure the delivery of public health services. The fundamental framework for the NPHPSP instruments is the *Essential Public Health Services*. These *essential public health services* describe the specifics of public health activities appropriate for communities at various levels. It will include local and state levels of public health activities. For the purpose of this paper the *essential public health service* that is *Inform, Educate and Empower People about Health Issues* is selected to discuss. For the local and state assessment levels, this service includes information, promotion and education of health. The health promotion activities are intended to promote better health and to reduce health risks. At local level, media advocacy and social marketing are used under health communication plans and activities. Health information and educational resources are made assessable. The service will also include health education and health promotion programs in partnerships with faith communities, schools, work sites and personal care providers. These programs are designed in a way to implement health promotion programs and to advertise health promotion messages. ("10 essential public," 2010).

This *essential public health service* is important in public health services as it provide accessible health information resources at state and local levels for communities. These services are useful in maintaining active collaboration with personal health care providers to promote public health messages and programs. The essential public health service *Inform Educate and Empower People about Health Issues*, build awareness and form attitudes using health education and communication sciences. The services are useful to provide information for decision making choices and also assist in a developing a healthy lifestyle in communities. The services provide media advocacy and social marketing to support communities in learning skills and behavior that

promote public health. The activities under this service are helpful to make informed decisions both on personal and public health issues. (National Public Health Performance Standards, n.d). Today, this service reaches to the public through hoardings, national media campaign advertisements on television and even as posters in clinics. *Back to Sleep* campaign to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and *Just Say No* to make awareness on curbing substance abuse are good examples of initiatives under this *essential public health service*. (Pfau, 2013).

The Ten Great Public Health Achievements is a list of remarkable public health accomplishments in the United States during the ten year periods from 2001 to 2010. The list includes vaccine preventable diseases, Tobacco control, Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases, Maternal and Infant Health, Motor Vehicle Safety, Occupational Safety, Cancer Prevention, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention, Cardiovascular Disease Prevention and Public Health Preparedness and Response. I believe among all these achievements, the achievements on cardiovascular disease prevention could be the one that might have resulted in the greatest reduction in morbidity and mortality. Heart disease and stroke was reported as the first leading cause of death in the United States since 1921. Later in 1938, it became the third leading cause of death. As per the 2009 CDC data, stroke is found to be the fourth leading cause of death in the United States. Almost a decade back, the age-adjusted coronary heart disease and stroke death rates were 195 to 126 per 100,000 populations. Within a ten year period, it decreased to 61.6 to 42.2 per 100,000 populations. It means a declining trend in the prevalence of stroke and coronary diseases are continuing. There are many factors that are contributing to this decline. Reduction in risk factors such as uncontrolled hypertension, high cholesterol, and smoking are important among these factors. Developments in treatments, medications and

improved quality of care also are major factors that have contributed to this public health achievement in the last decade. (Ten Great Public Health Achievements. 2011).



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