

**PUBLIC HEALTH IN AFRICAN**

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ABSTRACT

It is stated that Africa is the continent with the world's highest mortality rates, and it is the only continent where deaths from infectious disease still outnumber deaths from chronic disease (1). The people of Africa are often unable to get the care they need because of either lack of health care options in their area or because they are unable to afford proper health care. Public health in Africa is very important, to stop the spread of infectious diseases and to eradicate them (1). Also, the right to health is a universal human right which underpins the continuous call for universal health care. This call is ever more so in developing countries where there is limited access to basic health care. The best and most important way to improve public health in Africa is prevention. Many believe that the best way to reduce the prevalence of a disease is to first find a way to prevent further incidence of the disease. In order to provide effectively improve public health in Africa, health programs should not only focus on providing treatment, but also educating the people of the importance of public health. It is also important that the information being provided to these people are accurate (2).

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INTRODUCTION

Africa has always been one of, if not the world's poorest country and this will not change anytime soon. It is stated that Africa is the continent with the world's highest mortality rates, and it is the only continent where deaths from infectious disease still outnumber deaths from chronic disease (2). The people of Africa are often unable to get the care they need because of either lack of health care options in their area or because they are unable to afford proper health care.

Public health in Africa is very important, to stop the spread of infectious diseases and to eradicate them. Also, the right to health is a universal human right which underpins the continuous call for universal health care. This call is ever more so in developing countries where there is limited access to basic health care (2). There are many infectious diseases that plague Africa today, but the big three are HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. While two of the big three have a cure, they are still a very big concern for the people of Africa; if the people were educated and provided the appropriate care they can greatly reduce the number of people infected with these diseases and prevent it from spreading further into other areas of Africa or outside of the continent (3).

Public health concern in Africa is based on how to promote the quality health care system and help the under deserve area in promoting standard health policy that will fight the affecting microorganism within the area and promote awareness in preventing measures. The other Concern is to tackle both communicable and incommunicable disease thereby creating a supportive method, availability, and accessibility of drugs and care need for the communities. They also have priority of building and improving hospital within the communities, accesses to the good water system, fighting hunger, increase child immunization, access to prenatal care and prevent and treat HIV/AIDS (3).

The World Health Organization(WHO) with the help of many developed countries tackles these concerns by building public health centers that are accessible and available for the under deserve countries. Ones example of this would be the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), this program focus was to contain and provide treatment to the people of Africa who were infected with AIDS (3). WHO also builds public health school as a medium to educate and promote preventive measures, helping them to under the importance of maintaining and promoting a healthy environment, improving their knowledge on methods of effective prevention, managing and control of an existing diseases

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and creating awareness of any further outbreak disease (3). The best method to effectively improve public health in any area is prevention. Providing treatment and care for every infected individual to improve the current state of Africa is commendable, but not ideal. These programs will be a lot more effective in improving the future state of Africa by focusing on more preventative methods. Studies have revealed that public health policies and programs would be more effective should they not only focus on caring for diseases like malaria and AIDS, but rather focus on educating the people to prevent future infections (4). It is important that current and future public health programs work closely with not just the government, but also community health workers who understand the importance of prevent and can communicate to the community in their native language in a way that they will be able to understand (4)

DISCUSSION

Access to public health should be not only be available to developed nations, but for all nations. The U.S. along with WHO and other developed countries has made an effort to build hospitals and health centers in Africa to promote public health, but it is not enough. These efforts should be more focused in communities that are in dire need of treatments for any disease or condition (4). There was a study that investigated the diagnostics of Chronic Kidney Diseases (CKD) in Africa. The results show that while CKD is a growing problem in Africa, people were not going to the hospital to be diagnosed or treated even though there were programs developed to treat individuals with CKD. A key factor that led to people not being treated was transportation. There were individuals either had no method of transportation to get to the hospital or the commute to the hospital was too far. WHO along with other developed nations need to not only focus on providing treatment, but also make sure it is accessible to multiple communities (5).

In order to provide effectively improve public health in Africa, health programs should not only focus on providing treatment, but also educating the people of the importance of public health. It is also important that the information being provided to these people are accurate. In a study conducted in Tanzania, it was revealed that the reason why the people in this community do not use contraceptive methods when practicing sex is due to misinformation (6). The males in this community believed that the use of any contraceptives will result in them no longer being able to have children. Because this community is male dominated, it forced the females to abstain from contraceptives as well. While it is true that some contraceptive methods prevent an individual from having children in the future, there are plenty of safe contraceptive methods that will not affect their fertility in the future. These people were misinformed about contraceptives and abstained from using it, which led to these people being more susceptible to sexual transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy. When designing a program to help the people of Africa, it is important to also find a way to educate these people to stop the spread of disease (6). The best and most important way to improve public health in Africa is prevention. Many

believe that the best way to reduce the prevalence of a disease is to first find a way to prevent further incidence of the disease. A studied conducted in Nigeria showed the young unmarried Nigeria women around the ages of 15-24 was not using protection during their first and future encounters (7). The results of this study indicated that this was a huge contributor to the spread of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. The authors believe that in order to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria that we should focus on preventing further infections by educating the young women of Nigeria. Many of the women were aware about HIV/AIDS, but they did not know how it is transmitted or how to prevent transmission. These women (especially those on the lower end of social status) also had limited access on contraceptives like male condoms to prevent transmission of not only HIV/AIDS, but also other STDs. It is importance to focus not only on the treatment aspect of a disease, but also how to prevent further incidences. These women were aware of the disease and in some cases where to find treatment for them, but not how to prevent transmission; because of this the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria is still a problem today (7).

CONCLUSION

Every Human being is born with a universal right to public health. This right should not be limited or denied because of where a person born or because of their financial status. It is the duty of WHO and other developed nations to share their resources and knowledge to promote public health in Africa. It is important that we fulfil our duties, so that we can stop the disease from spreading to multiple areas and prevent future infections. Prevention is the most important aspect of a disease and in order to increase prevention, we should focus on educating the people of how certain diseases are transmitted and how to prevent transmission. It is possible to improve public health in Africa, but the efforts have to focus in the right areas and on the right problems.

Conflict of Interest: None

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