



## Public Health

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Why does Public Health matter? This is a question that begs answering, as the answers to this question expose the need to place public health on a pedestal of importance especially in our present century.

With the world being inundated with unprecedented public health issues - from the pandemic ravaging the world in its wake to the climate crisis impeding on community health and even to the prevalent food insecurity and other food-related challenges, all these have laid bare the disparaging truth and reality of our inadequate health system.

Looking back prior to 2020, the past few decades had chronicled some of the most significant achievement in public health, from reductions in child mortality to increased access to safe water and sanitation, prevention and control of malaria and HIV/AIDS and many others. However, the plethora of global issues in 2020 and now in 2021 has dealt a devastating blow to these great strides which took decades to achieve.

In a world drowning with public health challenges, it is indeed a necessity to employ and implement all possible strategies to strengthen our health systems as well as improve preparedness and response to global health emergencies. Understanding the basis of public health, including having adequate knowledge of its ten (10) essential services is certainly a strategy communities can employ to improve community health performance, and hence solve community health problems.

These ten essential public health services are as follows:

- **Monitor health:** Monitor health status to identify and solve community health problems.
- **Diagnose and investigate:** Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community.
- **Inform, educate, and empower:** Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.
- **Mobilize community partnerships:** Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems.
- **Develop policies:** Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts
- **Enforce laws:** Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety.
- **Link people:** Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.
- **Assure competent workforce:** Assure competent public and personal health care workforce.
- **Evaluate:** Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.
- **Research:** Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

While knowledge about the basis of public health services is essential to solving community health problems, a shift in the mind-

set of individuals - particularly in the area of lifestyle - is pertinent to mitigate global health challenges. It is time we exposed and explored the undeniable linkage between public health issues and individual behaviour.

Tony Blair, the Prime Minister of Britain, aptly summarized this in 2006 with the following words, "We are now in a new era, the time of conditions of affluence, of degenerative and man-made diseases... Our public health problems are not, strictly speaking, public health questions at all. They are questions of individual lifestyle - obesity, smoking, alcohol abuse, diabetes, sexually transmitted disease". Knowing this, which path shall we tread as individuals?

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