

Babylon University – College Of Medicine
Department of Community Medicine

*Lectures in Community Medicine
For 4th Stage Students
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2010 – 2011*

Lecture 11

Health Education

Health Education

Is that part of health care that is concerned with promoting healthy behavior. A person's behavior may be the main cause of a health problem, but it can also be the main solution.

Health Education (HE) does not replace other health services, but it is needed to promote the proper use of these services *e.g. immunization*.

HE is not the same as health information.

Correct information is certainly a basic part of HE.

HE and PHC:

Individuals and families, not doctors and other health workers make most of the important decisions that affect their health.

Mothers decide what food to give to their families and how to prepare it.

Families decide when to go to doctors, where to go and whether or not to follow the instructions they receive from the health worker.

People need to be equipped with knowledge, attitude and skills necessary to exercise individual and community responsibility.

Major objectives of HE are:

- To enable people to define their own problems and needs.
- To understand what they can do about these problems with their own resources combined with outside support
- To decide on the most appropriate action to promote healthy living and community well-being.

Understanding Behavior:

There are many reasons why people behave the way they do.

If we want to use HE to encourage healthy living, we must know the reasons behind behavior that causes or prevents illness.

The following are the main reasons for people behavior:

1- Thoughts and feelings; our thoughts and feelings about the world are shared by:

A- Knowledge often comes from experiences, but we can also get it from information provided by people through various channels.

B- Beliefs: they are usually derived from family, relatives or from people we respect, we accept them without trying to prove that they are true, beliefs indicate what is acceptable and what is not, they are difficult to change, some are harmful and some are useful and some are neither. So they act as social determinants of diseases.

C- Attitudes: these reflect our likes and dislikes; they often come from our experiences or from people close to us.

D- Values: these are the beliefs and standards most important to us, people from the community share many values.

2- People who are important to us; when some one is important to us, we often listen to him and try to do what he does, e.g. parents, teachers, religious leaders, community leaders, close friends and good health care providers.

3- Resources: these include money, facilities, services etc...

4- Culture: the normal forms of behavior, beliefs, values and the use of resources in the community form a way of life, this is known as culture, cultures have been developed over hundreds of years by people living together and sharing experiences in a certain environment.

Helping people to lead healthier life ;

1- Using force; it gives a temporary change in behavior.

2- Giving information; it is needed but the success is not always there.

3- Discussing and participation; this is the most vital part to help through community full participation.

Health education with individuals (counseling):

A person with needs and a person who provides support meet and discuss in such a way that a person with need gain confidence in his or her ability to find solutions to the problems.

- It relies heavily on communication.
- It can be part of the treatment.
- It is an important aspect of disease prevention.
- It means choice not force.

HE with groups:

A group is a gathering of two persons or more who have common interest. e.g. Family, factory workers, classmates, religious group, or clinic patients. Groups can do things that several individuals can not do by themselves, they support their members, and they also enable people to learn from each other.

The advantages of group education:

- Provide support and encouragements.
- Permits sharing experiences and skills.
- Makes it possible to pool the resources of all members.

HE with communities:

When it is needed?

For some health problems, the impact is imposed on many or all members of the community and the solution is the cooperation of many of its members (provision of clear water supply, emergency situation), the role of the health worker is to help the community to organize itself so that learning will take place and action will follow.