

((Foundations of Medicine))

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Concept of Health and Disease:

Health is not mainly an issue of doctors, social scientists and hospitals, it is an issue of social justice. Health is a fundamental human right and a world-wide social goal. Modern medicine is often accused for its preoccupation with the study of disease and neglect of the study of health.

An understanding of health is the basis of all health care. A brief account for the changing concepts of health is given below:

I- Biomedical Concept: Health has been viewed as an absence of disease and if one is free from disease, then the person is considered healthy.

The concept has minimized the role of the environment, social, psychological, and cultural determinants of health.

II- Ecological Concept: Health is a dynamic equilibrium between man and his environment, and disease is a maladjustment of human to environment.

Human ecological and cultural adaptation do determine not only the occurrence of disease but also the availability of food and the population explosion.

III- Psychosocial Concept: Health is influenced by social, psychological, cultural, economic, and political factors of the people concerned.

IV- Holistic Concept: This model is a synthesis of all the above concepts, This approach implies that all sectors of society have an effect on health and the emphasis is on the promotion of health.

Definitions of Health:

Health is one of those terms which most of people find it difficult to define, although they are confident of its meaning.

Therefore, many definitions of health are offered from time to time including the following:

- I- The condition of being sound in the body, mind especially freedom from physical disease or pain.
- II- A state of relative equilibrium of body form and function which results from its successful dynamic adjustment to forces tending to disturb it.
- III- A state of equilibrium between humans and the physical, biological, and social environment compatible with full functional activity.

The ideal definition for health of **WHO*** is:

The health is the state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and it does not merely mean the absence of disease or infirmity.

* **WHO (World Health Organization):** A United Nations agency to coordinate international health activities and to help governments improve health services.

The Environment:

The total environment of human beings includes all the living and non-living elements in their surroundings. It consists of three major components: physical, biological, and social. The relationship of human beings to their environment is reciprocal in that the environment has a profound influence on them and they in turn make extensive alterations to the environment to meet their needs and desires.

Physical Environment:

This refers to the non-living part of the environment – air, soil, water, minerals – and climatic factors such as temperature and humidity. The physical environment is extremely variable: deserts, cold dry or humid plateaux, marshlands, high mountains or tropical rainforest.

Climatic factors such as temperature and humidity have a direct effect on humans, their comfort and their physical performance. The physical environment also exerts an indirect effect by determining the distribution of organisms in the biological environment: plants and animals which provide food, clothing and shelter; animals which compete with humans for food; and parasites and their vectors which produce and transmit disease.

Humans alter the natural characteristics of the physical environment, sometimes on a small scale but often on a very large scale: from building a hut and digging a small canal to irrigate a vegetable garden to the

building of large cities, draining of swamps, irrigating arid zones, damming rivers and creating large artificial lakes.

On the global scale, there is increasing concern that human activities are steadily leading to a significant rise in the earth's temperature with forecasts of dire results.

Biological Environment:

All the living things in an area – plants, animals, and microorganisms – constitute the biological environment. They are dependent on each other and ultimately, on their physical environment. Thus, nitrogen-fixing organisms convert atmospheric nitrogen into the nitrates that are essential for plant life. Plants trap energy from the sun by photosynthesis. A mammal may obtain its nourishment by feeding on plants (*herbivore*) or on other animals (*carnivore*) or both (*omnivore*). Under natural conditions, there is a balanced relationship between the growth and the size of the population of a particular species, on the one hand, and its sources of food and prevalence of competitors and predators, on the other hand.

Humans deliberately manipulate the biological environment by cultivating useful plants to provide food, clothing and shelter, and raising farm animals for their meat, milk, leather, wool, and other useful products. They hunt and kill wild animals, and destroy insects which transmit disease or which compete with them for food.

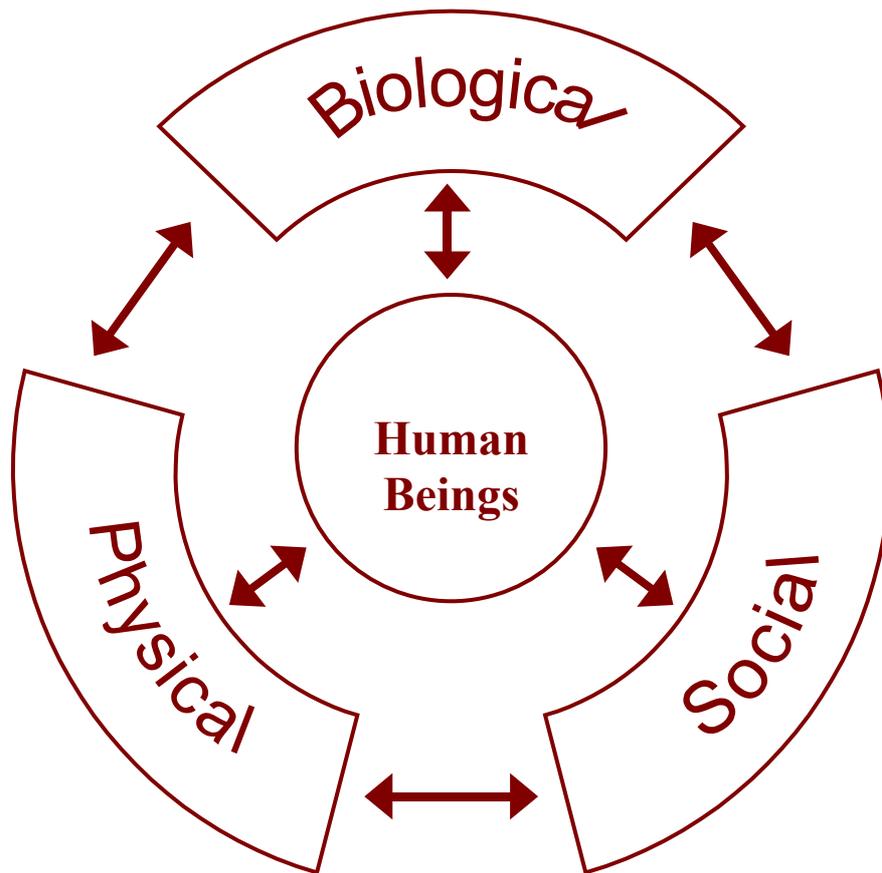
In many parts of the tropics, insects, snails and other vectors of disease abound and thrive. This is partly because the natural environment favors their survival but

also because, In some of these areas, relatively little has been done to control these agents.

Social Environment:

This is the part if the environment that is entirely made by humans. In essence, it represents the situation of human beings as members of society: family groups, village or urban communities, culture including beliefs and attitudes, the organization of society – politics and governments, laws and the judicial system, the educational system, transport and communication and social services including health care.

This figure represents the interaction between human beings and their environment:



The characteristics of Five-Stars doctors are:

- 1- Community leader.
- 2- Care provider.
- 3- Communicator.
- 4- Decision-maker.
- 5- Member in the team.

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