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Department of Community Medicine

*Lectures in Community Medicine
For 4th Stage Students
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Lecture 22

School Health Services

A coordinated health system that ensure a continuum of care from school to home to community health care providers and back. The overall objective of the school health program is to ensure that every child is as healthy as possible so as to obtain the full benefit from his or her education.

It is universally recognized that the health of school children deserves special attention.

In order to derive the maximum benefit from the educational program, the child must be healthy physically mentally and emotionally. Children at school are exposed to a variety of hazards; physical injuries, infections and emotional problems.

School age is the period during which the child is undergoing rapid physical and mental development; a healthy environment is required to provide the child with the best opportunity of making the appropriate adjustments that are required during this critical period. The school provides a unique opportunity of health education, a means of establishing firm foundation of healthy habits for the future adult population.

By safeguarding the health of school children of today, one is ensuring the health of adults of tomorrow

In many developing countries including Iraq the need of good school health program is particularly critical, in many developing countries, the school children are the survivors of a high childhood mortality. Many of them still bear the sequel of the diseases which were responsible for the deaths of the other children and most are subject to the environmental conditions which predispose to the high morbidity and mortality of preschool age group.

The goals of School Health program:

These goals vary between communities according to; students needs, community resources for health care, available funding, the view of health services held by schools administrators and other key decision makers in the school systems.

The goals:

- 1- Ensure access to PHC, It should be integrated with PHC.
- 2- Provide a system for dealing with crisis medical situations. These crises may occur every day such as accidents, acute complications of certain diseases such as seizures, asthmatic attacks or DM.
- 3- Provide screening and immunization monitoring.
- 4- Provide systems for identification and solutions of students' health and educational problems.

A team approach utilizing the available resources can lead to greater progress, e.g. the correction of visual defects, mental health problems and family problems.

- 5- Provide comprehensive and appropriate health education.
HE can be carried out on individual level or group basis by school health service personnel in classroom or outside the class room
- 6- Provide a healthy and safe school environment that facilitates learning.
- 7- Provide a system for evaluation of the effectiveness of the school health program, this program is critical for strengthening and maintaining accountability, sufficient resources is needed.

Components of the school health program:

Although the detailed organization of a school health program varies from one place to another, the following elements are usually represented:

1- Medical inspection:

Routine periodic medical examinations are designed to detect defects that required medical attention. The medical examinations also provide the opportunity of discussing with parents and teachers the health needs and problems of the children.

2- Assessment of handicapped children:

The school health program must include some mechanism for finding children who are physically or mentally handicapped, assessing them, supervising them and placing them in the most appropriate institution if special care is indicated, the main categories of handicapped children are:

- 1- Blind or partially sighted
- 2- Defect in hearing and/or speech
- 3- Epileptic children
- 4- Educationally subnormal
- 5- Maladjusted and psychotic
- 6- Physically handicapped.

3- Health education:

The objective of the health education program at school is to make the children value health as a desirable asset, and to know what the individual and community can do to maintain and promote health. At this age, the aim is to ingrain in children healthy lifestyles with regard to such issues as diet, exercise, smoking, abuse of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, and unsafe sex. Health education can be incorporated into the syllabus.

4. Safe school environment

It is necessary to ensure that school environment is maintained at a high standard to safeguard the health of the children and to providing the children with practical example of healthy living in order to reinforce the theoretical lessons that learnt in the classes on health education.

School should be sited in a safe place in an area free from excessive noise and other nuisances such as smoke, soot or industrial dust.

The building should be constructed to prevent accidents, the class rooms should be adequate size, well lighted and well ventilated.

Sanitary facilities for disposal of waste should be provided, there should be adequate supply of safe water for drinking, washing and gardening.

There should be adequate facilities for recreation.

Control of infections in the school environment:

Going to school represents for many children the first opportunity to mix with children other than close relatives and immediate neighbors. Hence, schooling often represents their first contact with infections to which they are susceptible.

The control includes the exclusion of sick children from school and the protection of the susceptible children against such infection by immunization.

Parents should be urged not to send sick children to school and teachers should, in the course of daily inspection of the children, note any sign of illness.

The health of school teachers and other school personnel should be kept under careful observations to ensure that they do not transmit infection to

children, school teachers should be routinely screened for TB and food handlers for enteric infections. In highly endemic areas **deworming** is needed by mass chemotherapy using broad spectrum anti helminthes.

5- Nutrition:

The school health program should include some mechanism for the promotion of adequate diet for school children. It should be ensured that each child is adequately nourished and, where specific defect are noted to provide some means of supplementation, some health education of parents should be included. Practical instruction in nutrition can include the growing of food crops in the school garden and cookery class especially for girls. Special epidemiological surveys can be conducted to investigate specific health problems.