

Socio-economic Status

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Introduction

The most imperative determinants of health are the socio- economic status. It has been analyzed and researched that those individuals that are at a socio economic disadvantage are the ones who have poor health outcomes in comparison to other Australians. The relationship that exists between the socio economic status and the health of individuals is often referred as the “social gradient of health”. According to the gradient the higher the education and the income of the individual are responsible for the health status of the individual. This is pertinent in Australia and other countries as well ("Australian Government Department of Human Services", 2016). As per the social gradient the higher socio economic status that you have, the better facilities the individual can afford for himself including health services. It also helps in making better informed decisions pertaining to the health and lifestyle related diseases.

The World Health Organization has documented this relationship of the socio economic status of individuals with health and equity. These are known to be one of the most imperative markers for the purpose of development of social health determinants. Research has indicated that detailed policies that focus on enhancing health care services and promote equity need immense preparation for implementation of interventions. The socio- economic status comprises of the economic status, the social status and the employment status of the individual that has an impact upon the outcomes of health for patients ("Department of Health | The Social Determinants of Health", 2017). Poor or ill health is measured by the lack of income, low paying jobs, personal beliefs, superstitions, environmental factors, education levels, housing facilities and access to health care facilities and services.

Epidemiological Data Related to Socioeconomic Status

The study of the distribution and health outcomes and determinants that exist within a population is known as epidemiology. Having a lower socio economic status is mainly linked to lower the life expectancy status and is known to be a risk factor that promotes poor health (O'Campo & Dunn, 2012). Those belonging to the lower socio-economic status, tend to have a lower expectancy of life, higher death rates due to cardio vascular ailments, cancer, suicides and even accidents. These rates are high due to alarmingly high rates of smoking, obesity and consumption of alcohol combined with little or no levels of physical activities are victims.

Socio economic status mainly refers to the educational levels, degree of employment and the income earned by an individual. Those who are disadvantaged usually have received low education and earn a low income, thereby reducing their options of attaining and accessing health care services (Lampert, Kroll, von der Lippe, Müters & Stolzenberg, 2013). Individuals who are not very well educated may have lesser information pertaining to the various choices that are available in the health care services that are accessible by them. This factor is essential as it helps in making of informed decisions. Lack of opportunities of employment or no employment can have an impact on the mental status of the individuals as well henceforth impacting the health status of the individuals.

The way of living of a person is also impacted by their health status, for instance do they smoke, consume food that is rich in oil and sugar. There are other health determinants as well that comprise of the gender and ethnicity of the individuals. Research states that health status

amongst those belonging to ethnic groups in Australia in comparisons to whites have a substantial poor health status. For instance in Africa the mortality rate of women is much higher in comparison to men (Marioni et al., 2014). The health of an individual is also determined by the access that they have to social resources in which education is the most intrinsic feature.

Government Organizations Addressing Socioeconomic Status

There are several strategies and policies that have been initiated by both governmental organizations and nongovernmental organizations that deal with issues pertaining to socioeconomic status so that health equality can be attained. This needs to implement policies across several social determinants that comprise of better housing options, access to education and employment facilities. These goals need to be aligned with all the governmental sectors so that cross sectoral programs can be developed as well. In Australia for instance Medicare is working under the department of Human services to provide funds for primary health care facilities for Australians. The organization is funded by the universal health care system ("Medicare - Australian Government Department of Human Services", 2017).

The Australian government has initiated several programs to help enhance the socioeconomic status of individuals. The governmental organizations need to work together and leverage the frameworks that exist currently so that their targets that have been mentioned above can be met.

Evidence based health promotion strategies addressing socioeconomic status

The main goal of health promotional strategies is to strengthen the community action, develop the personal skills of the individuals, create supportive environments, reorient the health services that are available and empower the citizens to make informed decisions pertaining to their health. The Ottawa Charter of Health Promotion is one such initiative that has been undertaken by the WHO (Mcqueen & De Salazar, 2011). The Charter emphasizes on the concept that health promotion is a process that needs participation in the broader sense. It is defined as the process of helping people to gain control and to enhance their health so that they are able to reach a point of total wellbeing and be able to realize their own personal goals and aspirations. Also at the same time be able to satisfy their own needs and demands and change or adapt to the changes in the environment. Promoting health is not the responsibility solely given to the health sector but instead it is the responsibility of each citizen to promote healthy living. The definition provided by the Ottawa Charter thus covers a large area as it comprises of both environmental factors and the individual factors as well in defined resources that can be able to perfectly define the concept of health. The health promotion program needs to have complete focus on the environment and the health of the individual thus needing a large number of interventions apart from the widely used medical model.

Health promotion & illness prevention strategies in communities

By promoting health and illness prevention strategies in a community it will help the government in forging healthy public policies, help in building an environment that is supportive in nature, strengthen the actions of the community and at the same time help in the reorientation of the

health services. This will help individuals to have complete control on their health because the socio economic status is the most essential weapon that humans can make use of to achieve good health and prevent diseases. The Ottawa Charter thus strives to help communities all over the world to obtain their goals of having optimum health. Individuals can also contribute by dealing with these existing inequalities by stressing on the importance of making decisions that are sound in nature and take responsibility for the wellbeing of their own health. By continuing their education or evens seeking higher education will help them to improve their socio economic status and make informed decisions. Communities can also lend their support by giving health care services to their residents ("Socioeconomically Disadvantaged People", 2017). There is an initiative known as the Youth of the street that aims to enhance the health for those belonging to a socio economically low status. The Australian government has also supported various community programs by access to free medical services and even funds. Medicare has a wide range of services that are provided from the best health care providers at a subsidized rate. It provides funding to hospitals and pharmacy companies as well. Thus providing rebate from the health services that are a part of the Medicare plan. The main goal of these plans is to ensure that all citizens of Australia have equal access to medical services and affordable health care despite their socio economic status ("Medicare - Australian Government Department of Human Services", 2017). The Medicare program has several policies that help individuals to get access to the best health care services in Australia.

Importance of social determinants of health

Social determinants of health are imperative as these factors have underlying disparities that are preventable in nature. These low health outcomes are mainly due to the lack of interaction that is prevalent amongst the individual and the environment. By enhancing the conditions of the citizens it will ensure for a population that is much healthier and has the ability to take informed decisions ("Social Determinants of Health | Healthy People 2020", 2017).

Conclusion

In concluding it is apparent that by enhancing the health services solely the problem of bringing about a reform in health of the citizens. Thus following an approach that is more comprehensive in nature is the need of the hour. It is imperative that steps are taken in both health sectors and social sectors on a broad base so that all the citizens can reap the benefits. The governmental and nongovernmental organizations need to develop policies that lend support to improving the health of individuals from the grass root level ("The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Health, Illness, Behavior, and Society", 2014). Health promotion needs to make use of various strategies including equality pertaining to access to health care services so that individuals can have complete control over their health and decisions that are taken by them are based on sound information.

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