A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO PUBLIC HEALTH OPERATIONS AND SERVICES: Towards positive coordination with health care and other services

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Public health challenges in Europe (1)

• Evolving disease burden: towards a high prevalence of non communicable diseases
  • Non communicable diseases now constitute more than 85% of the disease burden in the WHO European Region, with everything that implies:
    • a shift from top-down control over public health to engaging citizens and patients in health services;
    • major importance of lifestyle risk factors in disease etiology;
    • growing inequalities in health indicators.
  • Persistent challenges (communicable diseases, environmental threats)

• Health is both an input to and an outcome of wealth, economic prosperity and social well-being

• People have the right to health, including (but not only) “healthcare services”... tackling the broad definition of health / wellbeing
Public health challenges in Europe (2)

• Challenges to health and equity
  • How can we improve the level and distribution of health, wealth and social well-being through health systems and public health policies?

• Challenges to societies and health systems
  • How can we ensure that public health and health systems are sustained in the future?

• Challenges to individual health services and public health services
  • Many countries in the region still have inadequate public health services
  • In 2009-2010, 14 countries in the European region were working individually or in a multi-country setting on PHS reform and strengthening
  • How can we monitor, manage and improve performance for greater effectiveness and efficiency?
Public health challenges in Europe (3)

Building on past accomplishments...

Adapting to changing realities...

Identifying new challenges...
Public health definition (1)

- A core definition of public health has proved elusive
- Intensive consultations (17 January – 28 February):
  - Within WHO/Europe
  - With the WHO/Europe public health expert group
  - Comparisons of definitions used by main partners
Public health definition (2)

“Public health is the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through organized efforts of society”

Sir Donald Acheson, 1988
Sir Donald Acheson’s definition important characteristics (3):

• The definition is intentionally generic (flexible...).

• It refers to public health as both a science and an art, essentially and always a combination of knowledge and action. **Public health must have an evidence base, but action must be taken on the basis of current knowledge & uncertainty.**

• The core purposes of public health are preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health.

• Public health is an organized societal function.
About the public health definition additional clarifications (4):

Important and implicit aspects of this definition to be highlighted and explicitly communicated when necessary:

- Health protection.
- Not only prolonging life: incorporate “wellness” or quality of life.
- Individual responsibility in the real context of feasible choices.
- Ensure political will for equity and human rights in relation to health.
- The importance of health systems to public health improvement, including the key responsibility of Ministries of Health for public health, rather than simply as managers of the healthcare system.
Health system definition

The ensemble of all public and private organizations, institutions and resources mandated to improve or restore health. Health systems encompass both personal and population services, as well as activities to influence the policies and actions of other sectors to address the social, environmental and economic determinants of health.

Tallinn Charter, 2008
A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO PUBLIC HEALTH OPERATIONS AND SERVICES

Society (individuals, families, communities)

Health

Institutions/organizations

Service delivery

Dedicated to health

Governance

Resources

Health mandate

To promote, protect, restore health

Environment

Conceptual Framework of the boundaries of Health System and Public Health
Strengthening public health: guaranteeing delivery of 10 essential public health operations

Vary according to institution (PAHO, WHO, CDC), but these constitute the backbone of the proposed public health operations for Europe (piloted for the last 4 years):

1. surveillance and assessment of the population’s health and well-being;
2. identification of health problems and health hazards in the community;
3. health protection services (environment, occup, food safety);
4. preparedness for and planning of public health emergencies;
5. disease prevention operations;
6. health promotion operations;
7. evaluation of quality and effectiveness of personal and community health services;
8. assurance of a competent public health and personal health care workforce;
9. leadership, governance and the initiation, development and planning of public health policy;
10. health-related research.
We will have to update communication strategies to the 21st century.
Public health and health systems (2)

Public health is generated by the whole society, not only by the health system... it is broader... but it is also within the health system, and this this should not be forgotten... It should be acknowledged and encouraged (with proper financial mechanisms to support public health developments...)

World Health Organization
Regional Office for Europe
A Systematic Approach to Public Health Operations and Services
Public health policies

Health Systems

Public Health Services

Health Care Services

Non-Health System, health generating activities

Agriculture  Food  Tourism  ...

Environment  Transport  Education
Health and other policies

- Finance
- Tourism
- Agriculture
- Transport
- Education
- Food & Catering
- Mass Media
- Communication
- Industry & Commerce

Public Health beyond strict HS

Source: Erio Ziglio
Public health and primary care

The impression of relative indifference, distance, or perhaps discord between primary care and public health professionals offers a sharp contrast with the real practice which is observed in the daily activities of any primary care centre.

- Immunization
- Child and maternal health
- Screening
- Health advice...
Collaboration between professionals in health(system) organizations

There is a need for a better understanding of collaborative processes and for conceptual tools to help health professionals develop collaboration amongst themselves in complex systems.

Ref: D'Amour D, Goulet L, Labadie JF, San Martin-Rodriguez L, Pineault R

A model and typology of collaboration among professionals in healthcare organizations
BMC Health Services Research 2008, 8:188
doi:10.1186/1472-6963-8-188
Collaboration between professionals in *(public) health(care)* organizations

Current health policy in most countries calls for more effective delivery of accessible, continuous and comprehensive services. This phenomenon is related to a trend to new forms of health services organization, such as integrated care, health networks, program management and health in all policies...
Succinctly put, now is the time to carry out qualitative advances in the organizational model, overcoming current stagnation and favouring the implication of primary care and other healthcare professionals collaborating in public health operations.
Policy implications for health systems strengthening

1. Useful to distinguish community health services and individual health services
   - involve very different concerns (population-wide concerns of potential health threats and medical intricacies of individual healthcare patient)
   - both sets of services benefit from internal synergies

2. Single-issue programs tend to fragment health systems and services

3. Public health services need to be strengthened

4. Significant gains from stronger public health systems:
   - Avert costs of outbreaks and health threats
   - Build developmental infrastructure

Good opportunity to address this through Health Systems Strengthening initiative
The role of MoH in Public Health: Governance in health systems and beyond

• Public Health as a broad societal function.
• The governance function orchestrates and aligns the several efforts from different sectors in order to maximize health gain.
• Includes organizations, resources and services from the health system and other sectors of society, constrained only by the boundaries of society’s “organized efforts”...

and “Health Ministries should play a leading role by advocating, inspiring and guiding multisectoral action.”
Strengthening of the health systems … including public health

Renew commitment to public health and rejuvenate the work of the office in this important area.
Framework for action (1)

1. Conceptual framework
2. Strengthening regulatory frameworks for protecting and improving health
3. Improving health outcomes through health protection operations and services
4. Improving health outcomes through disease prevention operations and services
Framework for action (2)

5. Improving health outcomes through **health promotion** operations and services
6. Assuring a competent **public health workforce**
7. Developing **research and knowledge** for policy and practice
8. **Organizational structures** for public health services
Role of WHO Regional Office for Europe

- Ensure close collaboration with Member States and other key stakeholders to strengthen public health in Europe
- Develop a framework for action through a participatory process
- Review Public Health Tools and Instruments for the 21st Century
- Review public health operations to improve coherence and tackle new challenges (e.g., communication, social media)
- Increase coordination between public health and individual health(care) services
Also . . . to support Member States in their strategic developments to improve health outcomes

**Member State example:**

Innovative Spanish law on public health will modernize public health concepts and services, favouring evidence-based practice, linkage with primary care, and cost-effective and population-based interventions.
Subregional example: SEE Health Network
Wrapping-up...  

We need to strengthen public health capacity and services, understanding the importance of coordination, integration and teamwork among different health professionals and across sectors.

To break the barriers between traditional healthcare services and traditional public health activities, providing bidirectional information and practical tools, and fostering the best possible collaboration and synergy with other sectors.
Wrapping-up. . .

... And to never forget that we are at the service of citizens, both the healthy and the ill, all of them potential patients, and all individuals with faces and hearts, dignity and feelings, and that they are at the core of our mission...

THANKS!