

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH AND THEIR IMPACTS

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The definition of health by the WHO is a holistic integration of well-being in physical, mental and social factors of one's life. Having a healthy balance between the three ensures that the individual understands and is motivated to maintain them as well. The mental and social aspects have lately been entering the spotlight since people have only begun to take notice of the enormity of importance that they carry in determining the quality of one's physical health.

SDOH, or the Social Determinants of Health are being rigorously studied in order to improve the quality of health in individuals and the masses. The SDOH influences the quality of 80-90% of the health. These conditions may vary culturally, and can broadly be studied by observing five main domains:

- Access to healthcare
- Access to education
- Socio-economic conditions
- Neighborhood and built environment
- Social and community context

The WHO and governmental bodies across the globe have undertaken numerous projects to help battle health inequalities and the other socially dependant health related factors.

1. Access to quality healthcare services:

According to the studies, only 25% of the Indian population claim access to healthcare systems. Access to insurance and health coverage remains stalled due to the large demand in the presence of lower supplies.

Physical reach of well equipped hospitals marks a difference as well, and 37% of rural population of India find access to in-patient facilities, and 68% of the population are able to find out-patient facilities within a 5km radius of their localities. A steady increase in the numbers will ensure better knowledge and use of the available health care services.

Awareness programs, vaccination and blood testing drives, and other community based services that act as the bridge between the needy and the hospital care can gradually bring about a change.

2. Access to quality education:

The link between education and the willingness to make the efforts for a healthy lifestyle is directly proportional.

This factor mainly determines the awareness that an individual has regarding health matters. Having adequate knowledge about basic hygiene and reproductive health care practices is crucial.

It is observed that having lower awareness can be correlated with less priority towards health. Various health related interventions and programs that aim to bring about a behavioral change act as a cornerstone for progress.

3. Socio-economic conditions:

Poverty, employment, food and housing security are a couple of elements that are to be considered under this domain. India observes a concentration of households with lower socioeconomic status in specific regions, and the affluent members in others- this has created a disparity in the number and quality of health care centers across the country. The former group requires special attention since the socio-economic conditions are sources of great stressors to the mind, which gets in the way of

the physical well being as well. People's health depends on their lifestyle choices and their capacity to pay for quality medical care.

For food security and housing stability, a well-paying, consistent employment is essential. Savings are necessary for dealing with chronic illnesses or unexpected situations.

In order to battle these barriers, career counselling, job fairs and other programs that can aid people with finances to manage their households needs like food, shelter, education and health. Attention to children and adolescence has to be extended in terms of highly nutritious food, emotional support and knowledge.

4. Neighborhood and built environment:

The geological region and one's physiological spaces can be a major determinant of one's health index. This correlates with the socio-economic conditions of living and it's relationship with the availability of the healthcare facilities in the specific regions. Pathogens and other form of communicable diseases tend to be highly localised, and their effects are especially dependant upon factors like general public hygiene, drainage planning, presence of clean air and drinking water, and so on. Other aspects that could indirectly pose a threat would be the lack of well built roads and pedestrian space, availability of fresh and green spaces and the distance from the cityscapes.

5. Social and community context:

The relationships and interactions that people have with their family, friends, coworkers, and community members can have a significant impact on their health and well-being. It is also the domain which (in comparison to the rest), provides individuals with a considerable amount of control over their environment, and also aids them with dealing with the external stressors like unfavorable weather, workspaces, financial conditions and disease. A lack of social security can lead to severe mental disturbances and can make one prone to further socially harsh circumstances. Victims of bullying, absent parent(s), workspace discrimination, abuse require immediate response, cares and intervention at the earliest.

Several NGOs, and social workers across the country have been actively battling these issues by conducting awareness campaigns, taking legal actions when necessary and other measures to protect the vulnerable sections of the society.

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