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Review Article

Concept of Health Across Different Ages: A Review

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ABSTRACT

Health is not just absence of disease rather health is a holistic well being in terms of physical, psychological as well as environmental health of an individual. At different stages of live human beings attach different meaning to the concept of health. In childhood development of the child is central to the concept of health. In this paper perception and issues of health at different stages of human life are discussed. In human life childhood is all about timely and proper development of the child physically, mentally, emotionally and socially to develop the child into a responsible adult. Children who face developmental issues or health issues receive specific kind of interventions which are absolutely needed for their condition. These interventions are different from that of adults like small dosage of medicine to children or different intervention of therapy in children than in adults. Similarly in adults the perception of health and issues of health also differ from other stages. The interventions too at this stage are highly specific to the condition those are trying to cure. Lastly in old age there is different perception of health, old aged people generally experience many physical ailments like arthritis, hearing impairment and heart related issues etc. care of these people must be done catering to their specific needs. Taking care of old people is different from that of an adult or a child. Older people need extra attention because in old age they usually are dependent on someone's care.

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INTRODUCTION

As defined by the World Health Organization health is not merely absence of disease, rather it is a complete state of physical, mental and social well being. Concept of health across ages is perceived differently by different age groups of people. In case of children primarily health relates to the fact that they are physically and mentally developing on time. Children's delay in the developmental milestones may lead to disorders or disabilities that may be either physical or psychological in nature. As the child grows up and reaches the stage of adolescence there are different challenges in this stage as there is a lot of transition at this stage like development of primary and secondary sexual characters in the adolescent. This stage is also marked by emotional upheaval in the child due to hormonal changes taking place in his/her body. After adolescent comes the stage of adulthood. In this stage the individual is fully developed and grown and now takes on

responsibilities of jobs and careers as well as starting their own families. At this stage health is usually affected by excessive stress that maybe caused by multiple factors. Stress not only creates mental instability and tension but may also precipitate in physical body and may cause problems like high blood pressure etc. As the age advances and the individual grows older then the perception of health changes. In old age there are various challenges like increased susceptibility to physical ailments related to joints in the body, heart related issues, other issues like diabetes etc. Mental issues can also crop up in old age largely related to diseases like Alzheimer's disease which induces forgetfulness in the person of old age. Therefore it is evident that at different ages health is perceived in a different way and requirements of health care at that particular stage is also different. Medical attention at each stage is distinct, catering to the specific needs of the people in that particular stage. The perception and meaning of health at different life stages is discussed as follows:

PHYSICAL HEALTH:

Childhood: In terms of physical health a child perceives body without any disease or injury as healthy. In case of children health is largely concerned with them reaching to their developmental milestones on time. Developmental milestones include child's developmental features like increase in height, mental faculties, cognitive developments etc. Physical health for a child is also related to him/her getting timely vaccination. Protecting the child from communicable diseases or element borne diseases like cholera through contaminated water etc. is of utmost importance. Keeping a check on child's eating habits and the kind of food is also important. Children need timely and proper nutritious food for their proper development. Generally in case of children health related issues can arise through various factors such as:

- Genetics
- Infections
- Injury

Adulthood: At this stage the person becomes more aware about the health related aspects and consciousness to remain physically fit comes in people. Although people working on it may be less but largely all the adult population aspires to be physically fit. During adulthood the development is complete so possibility of developmental physical ailment is ruled out at this stage. At this stage challenges that are prevalent in some people in childhood like a genetic problem, then this issue is tried to be resolved medically and by adulthood the individual acclimatizes to his/her situation and understands and copes with his issues in a healthy way. But in healthy individuals in this stage health is affected by either of the following:

- 1) Infections
- 2) unhealthy lifestyle
- 3) injury

Old Age: This stage marks decline in physical health. Muscle mass and energy of the body decreases and the people of old age are more susceptible to ailments related to joints in the body like arthritis. During old age immunity of the body also decreases this also makes old people prone to infections from outside environment. Since the healing capacity of the body diminishes in the old age, therefore any injury takes place a very long time to heal and the old persons suffers the injury to great extent. Various chronic ailments related to the respiratory or circulatory system like difficulty in breathing, high blood pressure, heart related issues become very common in the old age.

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH:

Childhood: Childhood is the stage of carefree development and at this stage psychological impacts of stress etc is very minimal. The only problem arises when there is developmental delay in the child or complication in pregnancy of the mother. The delays in the developmental milestones may lead to mental ailment like intellectual disability (earlier known as mental retardation). The degree of this disability is clinically diagnosed by the mental health professionals and accordingly the interventions are provided to the child in question. During school going years some children may also develop specific learning disability like dyslexia or dysgraphia etc. Apart from the mental distresses children usually from the dysfunctional families end up with

severe or mild emotional issues like insecure attachment styles, aggression or sometimes truancy and delinquency from schools. Apart from home negative environment in school like culture of bullying negatively affects the child and may also lead to various mental issues like depression which leads to absenteeism from school. Mental health of a child is also important and for proper development of the child he/she needs a supportive and loving atmosphere.

Adulthood: At this stage if the person has got proper education then he/she understands the importance of mental health in life. But at this stage the person usually is afflicted by excessive stress due to work and managing all the things in his/her life. Stress not only affects the mental health of the person but according to model of psychoneuroimmunology, excessive stress may lead to decline in immunity of the person which may lead to increased susceptibility to various diseases. Some other common mental disorders include Anxiety related disorders, depression, eating disorders etc.

Old Age: During this stage the mental ailments are largely related to the memory of the person. Ailments like Alzheimer's lead to memory loss at old age. Another aspect is emotional well-being which is given by the supportive family and peers. Meaningful relationships in old age help in positive mental health of the old people and prevent negative affect like depression or anxiety. Some common ailments related to old age include vision changes/cataract and hearing loss, these problems may cause frustration also and not only affect the physical ailment but also impact the mental health of the old person. As per the World Health Organization, dementia and depression are the most common mental and neurological conditions in the old people, and they influence 5% and 7% of the world's more established populace, separately. Moreover, nervousness issues are found in 3.8% of the old populace, trailed by substance use issues at 1%.

Health and Well-being

Health and wellbeing is a concept consistent with the biopsychosocial model of health, which considers physiological, psychological and social factors in health and illness, and interactions between these factors. It differs from the traditional medical model, which defines health as the absence of illness or disease and emphasizes the role of clinical diagnosis and intervention.

According to a study health is defined as the ability to adapt and to self-manage. It includes the ability of an individual to adapt to the situation. They also emphasized on the subjective element of health which includes questions related to health and wellbeing. Generally answers to these questions vary greatly from one individual to another depending upon their needs. Some studies consider the broader definition of health to be a limitation because according to this definition the wellbeing is neither objective nor measurable. Also it has been pointed out that this definition focuses more on the individual aspects of the health rather than considering other factors of wider scope. Due to these limitations it appears that as if the sole responsibility of health lies with the individuals and the collective health has no role to play in the society

Mental health and well being - Generally wellbeing is considered as the perception of feeling good and functioning well. This aspect of wellbeing focuses on the personal experiences of people in the society. These experiences are later compared with the prevailing norms and values of the society. Hence it can be observed that there exist two basic dimensions of wellbeing, which are as follows:

Objective wellbeing – this aspect of wellbeing takes into account the basic needs and rights of people in the society. This encompasses the physical health, safety, education and adequate amount of food. This aspect of wellbeing is measurable by simply questioning the individuals regarding their health conditions and living standards or by simply going through objective measures like mortality rates and average life expectancy.

Subjective wellbeing – It can also be called the personal wellbeing of an individual. This aspect of wellbeing is measurable by questioning the individuals regarding their thoughts and feelings about their own health and wellbeing. Through these questions aspects like life satisfaction, positive emotions and the meaningfulness of their life can be known and studied.

Common measures that can be taken to maintain good physical and mental health throughout all stages of life:

In order to keep in check the basic health of any individual whether belonging to younger age group or older age group, they can opt for simple methods to ensure healthy lifestyle and enhanced wellbeing. Following are the ways that can help an individual in staying healthy by taking precautionary steps towards a healthy life:

Regular Check-ups - People should go for regular medical checkups with their physicians. Generally people belonging to older age face the issue of high blood pressure, diabetes etc which require frequent monitoring on a regular basis. Hence keeping a record of these ailments help in seeking faster medical help. In the same way infants also are susceptible into contacting communicable diseases easily. Hence parents should take their child to the pediatric or a general physician regularly to ensure healthy growth of the child. Individual should not hesitate in asking for medical help as and when required according to the persisting signs and symptoms.

Practice yoga/exercise - Another efficient way of keeping both the body as well as the mind healthy is by practicing yoga and regular exercise. This ensures the much needed activity in the body that keeps the whole body rejuvenated. Also engaging in these activities improves the mental well being of any individual.

Practice Meditation - Practicing meditation regularly for a certain period of time contributes in the mindfulness of an individual. The individual not only feels relaxed rather he/she also gets the added advantage of enhanced focus and better concentration.

Keep a Journal - One of the lesser known techniques to keep your daily life structured and less scattered is through journaling. It is the method of writing down little pieces of appreciation, gratitude or general activities and things that

bring calmness to one's life. This is an efficient way to enhance mental wellness when a person is going to tough times.

Socialize with family and friends - Socializing with the people around is also an excellent way to establishing meaningful relationships within family and in the society. This allows the individual to feel that they are a part of a wider community and they are loved and accepted there. This helps in enhancing confidence and feeling of belongingness among the people of the society.

Participate in group activities – Participating in group activities is a great technique for establishing value of team spirit among young children. However even people belonging to older age group can benefit from participating in group activities as this allows them to feel that they are valued in their society, thereby reducing chances of depression and loneliness among them.

Don't miss the medication – In many cases it is observed that people have the habit of missing out on their medication as soon as they start feeling better. This is a very wrong practice and should not be followed. Anyone suffering due to any ailment must never miss their medicines or checkups. This will ensure that the illness is cured from the root and will not lapse back in any condition.

Develop a hobby – This is an efficient way of keeping one's mind and body active by doing something that one enjoys. This will not only enhance the knowledge or skill but will also result in a better developed physical and mental wellbeing of an individual.

Setting routine – It is necessary that every individual has a healthy routine. This will ensure hygienic lifestyle and will act as a precaution to keep many harmful diseases away. Setting a routine also gives a sense of discipline in one's life that ultimately leads to easier functioning of day to day tasks.

Has a balanced diet – Every individual must ensure that they consume healthy and nutritious food every day. The main ingredient to healthy mind and body is the balanced diet rich in proteins, vitamins, fiber, minerals etc which makes the body resistant to many diseases and enhances overall vitality of the individual.

Use of positive coping strategies – In many cases it is observed that people come out of major life threatening diseases or injuries but their mental health is largely affected by such incidences. Hence in order to cope with such situations like post traumatic stress etc people should adopt positive coping strategies. Some of the best positive coping are mentioned above like socializing, journaling, having a hobby and doing philanthropic work. Such activities give purpose to an individual and work as a efficient source of positive motivation to get through any situation in life.

CONCLUSION

Through this paper it can be concluded that health is not just absence of disease rather health is a holistic, overall well

being in terms of physical, psychological as well as environmental health of an individual. At different stages of live human beings attach different meaning to the concept of health. In childhood development of the child is central to the concept of health. Childhood is all about timely and proper development of the child physically, mentally, emotionally and socially to develop the child into a responsible adult. Children who face developmental issues or health issues receive specific kind of interventions which are absolutely needed for their condition. These interventions are different from that of adults like small dosage of medicine to children or different intervention of therapy in children than in adults. Similarly in adults the perception of health and issues of health also differ from other stages. The interventions too at this stage are highly specific to the condition those are trying to cure. Lastly in old age there is different perception of health, old aged people generally experience many physical ailments like arthritis, hearing impairment and heart related issues etc. care of these people must be done catering to their specific needs. Taking care of old people is different from that of an adult or a child. Older people need extra attention because in old age they usually are dependent on someone's care.

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