

To be in Good Health

Samlee Plianbangchang

*College of Public Health Sciences, Chulalongkorn University,
Bangkok, Thailand*

Corresponding author

Samlee Plianbangchang, 80 Sukhumvit Soi 40, Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok 10110, Tel: 66 23 91 15 47; Mobile: 66 81 81 73 53 0; E-mail: samleep40@gmail.com

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Introduction

All people, rich and poor, would like to be in good health, not being ill or getting sick, movable to where they like to go, and able to work as desired. When people were not sick or ill, and they seem to be in good health, they should also have satisfaction with the quality of their life at a certain level.

In general, when people would like to be in good health, they would think of health care facilities – hospitals, health centers, medical clinics, doctors, nurses, and other health workers. People would think that all these places and persons would be able to make them healthy, happy, and achieving better well-being. In fact, and to a large extent, this is true, hospitals, and other health care facilities, doctors, nurses and other medical personnel can help people a lot indeed when they are sick, provide treatment and care to cure their sickness or illness, and rehabilitate them when they are disabled. Therefore, medical facilities including hospitals and medical staff at all levels of healthcare system are in the forefront to render treatment and care to people who are sick or disabled, and to provide the relevant advice, guidance and support to those who want to be in good health, whether they are ill or not.

Governments of all countries worldwide also think in the same way, when they want all of their people to be in good health, not suffering from sickness. Firstly, they will think of and resort to hospitals, health centers and other health care facilities, as well as doctors, nurses, and other categories of health staff to make their people healthy; and thus their investment for good health for all of their people places emphasis primarily, and as an important strategy, on the development of medical infrastructure and facilities, as well as strengthening medical workforce, producing more doctors, nurses and other types of medical personnel, to render health care and services to all people in community, with particular attention to treatment of the sick and rehabilitation of the disabled ; while promotion of good health in real term and prevention of sickness or illness for those people who are not yet sick or those who seem to be healthy becomes secondary objective in the process of promoting good health for all.

Looking at people in community, they may be categorized into two main groups, i.e. people who are already sick or ill and those who are already disabled due to their sickness or illness; these people need medical treatment and rehabilitation, especially by skilled medical doctors and other types of medical personnel who are working

mostly in medical facilities and institutions.

At the same time, there is another group of people which is referred to those who may already have had underlying pathological conditions that do not yet exhibit clinical sign or symptoms of sickness or illness, the people who may not even feel that they have any disease or illness because they still feel well or look well physically, can go anywhere they want, can go to work as desired. This situation is important for consideration of the concerned persons when they would like to promote better health or good health for all people. In reality, all people in community are actually not free from any sickness or illness they have health problems at varying degree, when some may feel sick or ill but others may still feel well.

For the people who are already sick or disable, the government has to assure them of the best treatment and care, to cure their disease or illness, and restore their health from disability until they can go back and enjoy normal life in their community, they can go to work as they wish, they can do whatever they like to do, they can help themselves and their families in the routine work, and they can actively contribute socially and economically to their community development. Very importantly, they will not become unnecessary burden financially and socially to their family, community or country.

For those people who are not yet sick or ill, medical and public health personnel should have effective means and ways to help them stay healthy as much and as long as possible, and as much and as long as they want, they will not fall sick or get ill easily or frequently; if falling sick or ill, they will not get sick or ill severely, they will not become bed-ridden or hospitalized unnecessarily without proper reasons. Health personnel will have to regularly and periodically pursue the assessment of health situations of people in community, in order to get the overall picture of community health profile for planning for people's good health and well beings.

There should be medical examination of individual persons for disease screening or early detection of disease to ensure timely and prompt treatment at the early stage of the sickness, if any. Such examination should be regularly done within an appropriate interval of time according to chronological age of people; the examination that is undertaken through the application of the modern medical and public health know-how, as well as of the locally or traditionally available health knowledge, the application that is appropriately

undertaken in an integrated and balanced manner. The results of health assessment in community and medical examination of individual people should be used as an important basis for the development planning of community based health care and services.

Government should have effective policy and plan to properly protect and maintain people's good health, not allowing health of people in community to become worse or more deteriorated than its current situations unnecessarily or without proper reasons, at least. Critically important, there should be effective means and ways to be pursued by government for better health and well beings of its people, in order for all people to reach the highest attainable level of health at the cost that family, community, and the country can afford in both terms of human and financial resources. The preferable option in this regard may be firstly to pursue the maintenance of current health status of people in community with special attention to those who are or appear not yet sick or disabled, keeping them, at least, apparently healthy as much and as long as possible, the people who have potentials for active social and economic participation at both community and country levels, the people who have potentials to contribute substantially to national development progress towards wealth and prosperity. While pursuing this strategy, it has to be strictly kept in mind that priority actions must also be given to those people who are already sick or ill, who need the best treatment and care to cure their sickness or illnesses.

It is a fact of life that everyone has to undergo a natural course of livelihood through an aging process; all people must get old chronologically with gradual deterioration of bodily structure and function. However, with proper health care at all stages of life (life cycle care) from birth to death (from womb to tomb), such deterioration of the body can be effectively delayed; then age will be only the numerical digits, not very much in term of bodily structure or function, which can be well maintained to a certain extent, while aging process is progressing. In this thinking, people can achieve a healthy longevity of life through healthy aging; acquire and maintain human potentials, ability and capacity to work in contributing to community and country social and economic development as much and as long as possible until the last moment of life.

What is health?

In the WHO Constitution, health is defined as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well beings, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” This definition of health opens an avenue for academics and health experts to mentally and intellectually be able to create or visualize an ideal perspective for health development endeavors in future, through their imagination and hope for the completeness in all aspects of health (physical, mental and social). However, many persons believe that, in practical sense or in the real world, reaching such a state of health as defined in the WHO Constitution is extremely difficult indeed or even not possible, it is only a utopian creation in the human mind. However, it is the definition that is for aspiration, motivation, and encouragement of those people, the people who have an extraordinarily strong desire and will to work continuously, tirelessly, harder and harder for further and further improvement of people's health, until it reaches the utmost state as so defined, in spite of the prevailing disease and infirmity. It is a source of inspiration, imagination, and hope for future endeavors in health, particularly when the advancement in science and technology development is progressing at an exponential rate towards the point where it is possible for such endeavors in future

can be actually realized and materialized for all people worldwide to have opportunity of enjoying a state of complete well-beings of health; physically, mentally and socially.

But in the present state of affairs, people can admit with confidence that there is no one without disease or infirmity, no one can avoid entirely sickness, illnesses or disability. All people have to undergo a natural path of life through all kinds of risks to health under the influence of a multitude of determinants; social, cultural, economic, and political. All people have disease, illnesses or disability at varying degrees of intensity and severity according to the individual health status and situation as determined by their multifaceted environmental factors and their genetic endowments. This is a plain perception in health and disease of most of people today.

Realizing the utmost difficulty to reach the level of health as defined in the WHO constitution, the founders of the world health organization has provided an important encouragement in the Article 1 of the Organization's Constitution as its overriding objective for all Member States and WHO through their health development efforts for “The attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health”(Article 1 of the WHO Constitution). The pursuance of this Organization's objective is further motivated by a statement at the beginning part of the Constitution that “The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief economic or social condition.”

Concerned with the widening gap in health between developed and developing countries, and health gap among groups of people in the same country; and concerned with the unjust distribution of the world resources for health development to narrow or close such a gap, the World Health Assembly in 1977 passed an unprecedented resolution, calling for Health for All (Peoples) by the year 2000. Health for All in this context is defined as “the level of health that can permit all people in the world to lead a socially and economically productive life”. It is the level of health that can allow all people to lead an independent life; and as far as health matter is concerned, people will not have to depend on others unnecessarily or become a burden to others socially or economically.

This health goal looks forward to all people in the world acquiring potentials for contributing, individually or collectively to community and country social, economic, and political development. Very importantly, with the quest for Health for All, people must also have a reasonable amount of satisfaction of life according to their own respective status, situation and capacity.

This is the health concept that accepts the fact that within the present situations, physically, biologically, and psychosocially there will be no one free from the suffering due to sickness, illnesses or disability; the majority of people with have to lead a disease ridden life in varying degrees of magnitude, mild, moderate, and severe. However through proper means and ways people still have an opportunity of reaching the level of health that can permit them to lead a socially and economically productive and satisfied life. The road to this level of health must be firmly built on the foundation of Equity and Social Justice in Health, the core principle of Primary Health Care approach (Alma Ata Declaration, 1978) whereby health is accepted as a fundamental right of every human being and all people can freely get access to appropriate health knowledge, health technology and

health care on their own initiative or given by health care providers; the knowledge, and technology that can enable them to do something for themselves in order to stay healthy as much and as long as possible, not falling sick unnecessarily, be able to make the most appropriate decision when there is a need for resorting to help of others as far as individual and family health matter is concerned. Health care in this context should encompass not only physical or biological, but also psychosocial and spiritual dimensions.

All concerned sectors and disciplines must actively participate and get involved in providing such a comprehensive health care and services with particular emphasis on care at primary level; and all concerned should vigorously promote and support people in the development and management of their self-care and family-care as far as health matter is concerned.

Most critically important, people of all walks of life should actively participate and get involved in health development at all levels toward self-reliance in health, with particular emphasis at the individual, family and community, and the people should effectively exert their influence in health policy and program development at national level through the most efficient channel of people organizations which are fully supported by medical and public health institutions and professionals.

Even though health is a fundamental right of every human being and people may demand for good health from the government actions to provide them with effective care and services. But, primary responsibility for health is actually belonging to people themselves, who must basically own their health. They have to realize this very important responsibility and pay special attention to their own health, including to the best means and ways to care of their own health according to their own capability, capacity, and to their own affordable resources, financially or otherwise.

Role of Health Personnel

It is certain that people in general do not have or acquire adequate knowledge or proper tool at their disposal for effective use in taking good care of health of their own and of their family. It is a very important role of government, health personnel and other concerned persons to help develop a body of knowledge as well as a set of information and tools, including a proper mechanism and process for effectively educating and empowering people, building the people's capacity for taking the best care of their own and their family health. And not less important, the government and health personnel must help in the development of appropriate health technology for effective utilization by people, including developing methods and procedures for effective handling of those technologies by people. Community health personnel and community health volunteers at primary care level, in particular, have a critical role to play in promoting, supporting and facilitating the process to educate and empower people to ensure the effective development of their capacity to do things at their own initiative in health care to achieve self-reliance, particularly at the individual, family, and community levels.

Sustainable development of population's good health is indeed an important factor for country progress towards peace, security and prosperity. Good health of population is a basic element of human potential and human capital for national social and economic development progress. For this purpose, the main strategy to improve

people's health in the national health care system has to direct special attention to health promotion, health protection, health maintenance, and disease or illnesses prevention and control, so that people will not fall sick easily or unnecessarily at the cost to the country. Public health work must come in parallel with medical interventions with special emphasis on health care of the grassroots at individual, family and community levels. Under the principle of Primary Health Care for health of all people, national health development is to promote and support the work that is geared towards this direction of the development of core health care facilities (basic health infrastructure), including various categories of hospitals and health centers, as well as medical and public health institutions in the universities. Very necessary indeed for the effective efforts towards good health for all people, it is the active participation and involvement of all concerned sectors and disciplines, such as agriculture, animal husbandry, education, industry, and environment, as well as various community-based organizations, both public, private and voluntary, which are needed for maximum good outcome of people's health care, which should derive from the implementation of a "Complete-Life-Cycle Care Approach", care from conception in the womb towards infancy, young child, adolescent, adult and elderly (care from womb to tomb). This is the health care throughout people's life-cycle that is covering content and process of multidisciplinary health care in the broadest sense, and the health care that is organized and operationalized in a comprehensive, integrated and continuous or un-interrupted manner, the health care that requires the most efficient coordination and cooperation from all concerned stakeholders, and partners, including medical and public health personnel at all levels under strong public health leaderships which may or may not necessarily come from health professionals. Among other essential things, such health care system needs technical and other indispensable back up from hospitals and medical centers, as well it needs operational involvement of all health care facilities at district, sub-district, and village levels to ensure effective accessibility of all people to the required health care of good quality, accessibility through full participation and involvement of all concerned, especially of all people working at the grassroots for community health development, and such development needs full participation and involvement of all people of all walks of life. To underline, effective health development at any levels also requires social and political support in the broad scale.

Development Strategy

It is often said that there are two main approaches for the development of people's good health; i. e.

Passive Strategy: which pays primary attention to the strengthening of medical infrastructure for taking care of the sick and the disabled people, by constructing hospitals, medical centers and other medical facilities; producing doctors, nurses and other medical personnel necessary for responding to various needs and demands coming from people who have medical problems? Medical specialists are trained for providing services in various specialties. This strategy is necessarily required, because it is an important avenue for responding to immediate or acute need in health of most people, which is conveyed to the government every day through public or political processes; to which the government's response is most socially and politically desired, in most cases it is really the response to the matter of life and death of people.

All countries in the world accord a very high priority to the need and demand of people for medical treatment and care for the sick and the disabled, and they invest a lot of efforts for the development of infrastructure and facilities for rendering medical interventions and services, especially treatment and rehabilitation, which are particularly delivered in the medical institutions, on the understanding that when people get sick or disabled they must have opportunity under their fundamental right of receiving the best medical treatment and care of highest quality, efficiency and effectiveness, the services that can really guarantee curing of the disease or illnesses encountered by people.

Thailand is indeed lucky that it has a rather complete system of medical care infrastructure and facilities, which are technically strong and most up-to-date. Universities in Thailand have sophisticated hospitals and medical centers of excellence throughout the country, that can produce the required number of doctors and nurses, and can train medical specialists in various specific areas, the situation that can ensure the delivery of the best medical care services to all people in community and at the grassroots level.

Yet the available medical care services for treatment of the sick and rehabilitation of the disabled are not adequate for responding to the every day's health need and demand of all people. Population in the country is steadily increasing; more and more sick and disabled people, as well as old age people are added every year; these are increasing the workload of government, and becoming a heavy burden on existing resource capacity of the country. Furthermore, a significant number of people are still not yet satisfied with the currently provided medical care and services, especially in terms of quality, accessibility, and equity. Means and ways must be timely found to reduce this unavoidable burden on the government in order to prevent further deterioration of the population's health.

Pro-active strategy, under: which the government should have the right policy and approach that is really efficient and effective in delaying or stopping sickness, illnesses, and disability in the population. The government needs to develop and implement national policy and programs for promoting, protecting, and maintaining good health of all people; or in other word for preventing and controlling disease or illnesses, not opening a chance for people to fall sick easily or severely, paying special attention to disease risks, critically analyzing those risks and devising approaches and measures for their effective control, reduction, or prevention. Nowadays, there is a rapid increase of disease risks, physically visible or invisible; the risks which are exponentially added to the current world health situations, along with the accelerated rate of environmental and ecological degradation and deterioration; the situations that are coupled with the fast worldwide change in human's behaviors and lifestyles, which are coming as a results of rapid advancement in information, communication and transportation technology. Disease risks are such as air, water and soil pollutions, unsafe water and contaminated food supply, irresponsible commercial promotion of health products; these are in addition to tobacco smoking, harmful use of alcohol, use of addictive substances, and unsafe sexual practices; these are priority concerns of all governments, and these are important public health problems and challenges of the countries today. These problems are really intractable to the today's prevention and control measures of the governments.

Each government has to put a lot more of efforts and resources into the development of national health care policy, system, and

infrastructure to ensure adequate provision of effective health care and services to all people in both terms of quantity and quality, and in both short and long terms. Among others, the government may also allocate a reasonable amount of national resource for the development and implementation of national system of health insurance, with the primary aim to pay for the cost of health care for all people with special emphasis on the poor and the under-privileged. However and in whatever ways, such allocation will not ultimately be adequate in long term, the need for more resource to back up such a national health insurance scheme will be steadily increasing year by year. If this situation continues, and it is likely to continue, in a not too far future the government will not be able to shoulder this burden any longer, especially in financial term. It is to be kept in mind that such resource is accrued also from taxation collected from people, it should be wisely utilized in the most cost-efficient and cost effective manner to really benefit all people. If the current situation continues, the national health care in both quantity and quality will be further deteriorated due to lack of financial resource from government, and then people especially at the middle and lower levels will be more suffering and frustrated, and they will be resorting to blaming the government's performance in running the national health care system, it will become an important political issue.

Government may not have other better way than proper management of available health resources with a focus on financial resource through an effort to reduce cost of medical care in particular, by properly rationalizing decision on the choice in health interventions in taking care of the sick and disabled people to ensure the balance between medical and public health measures, under the principle that prevention is cheaper and better than cure. With more investment in proactive health strategy, that is emphasizing prevention and control of sickness or illness and disability, cost of medical care and treatment for the sick and the disabled will be gradually reduced.

Important element of pro-active strategy is primarily and firstly the work in area of health promotion as well as disease control and prevention, in order to ensure that people of all walks of life are able to stay healthy as much and as long as they live, not becoming ill or sick often or unnecessarily, not to be bed-ridden, able to move and function independently as desired, and ultimately able to contribute socially and economically to community and country development.

In the development of health programs for pro-active strategy, it is necessary to take into consideration of country-specific social, cultural, and economic determinants, as well as the country specific health risks and disease risks. Risk analysis and risk control or reduction should be particularly considered in the process of program development for effective prevention and control of sickness or disability. Food and nutrition should be specially emphasized in the programs in health promotion and disease prevention that will importantly lead to healthy people, healthy population who form a critical part of the work force with significant potentials to contribute effectively to national development progress.

Health promotion program is to support people to be really in good health, of not only physical but also mental and social well-beings, including spiritual dimension of life. This state of health will also encourage people to be aware of and appreciate the ethical and moral value of society which is necessary for the attainment of peace, security, and unity of people in community and country. These are

indeed an important part of social health.

Ultimate success of pro-active strategy in public health depends largely on active participation and involvement of all concerned sectors and disciplines in the development and implementation of programs in the areas especially of health promotion and disease prevention. Sectors; such as education, agriculture, natural resources and environment, industry; as well as information and communication technology, should be well aware of and concerned with health implications arising out from their development efforts, and incorporate appropriate policies in their sectorial development programs for protecting people's health through preventing those impacts. Multisectorial and multi disciplinary participation and involvement in public health program development and interventions are the overriding factors for a long term sustainable development in health towards a healthy population. This is a part beyond the attempt to ensure the absence of disease or infirmity.

However, works of health development under these two main strategies (passive and pro-active) are inseparable in health development process, they are linked, connected, overlapped, and supporting each other. Therefore works of health development for people's good health or healthy population under passive and proactive strategies must be carried out in parallel in the most integrated, comprehensive, and balanced manner.

Conclusions

Health of people intrinsically belongs to people themselves, they own their health individually and collectively. It is their primary responsibility to take the best care of their own health, so that they can stay in good health and to achieve and maintain their social and economic productivity as much and as long as possible.

Government, health personnel, and other concerned people have an important obligation and role to play in promoting and supporting people to gain awareness of the need for being in good health; and the need to command appropriate knowledge, attitude, perception, skills, and capacity for effective health care of one own self, and of the members in their families and communities. Promoting one own health in order to stay healthy, not to get sick easily is the fundamental responsibility of all individual people. People should not wait for the government or health personnel to come and make them healthy before they do anything for their own health. They should firstly take appropriate action to make themselves staying in good health all the time or as long as possible.

Pro – active strategy for long term sustainable development in health, among other important factors, requires modification and change in behaviors and life styles of individual persons and groups of people in the matters relating to food and nutrition, physical and mental exercise, refraining from tobacco smoking, or over drinking of alcohol, and avoiding other risks to health, especially the known risks, as well as trying to study the unknown or possible health risks. All of these measures for good health are mostly the matters of human behaviors and lifestyles which need appropriate modification or change for happiness and satisfaction of life that come mainly from healthiness.

Furthermore, human body is the most wonderful thing that is naturally created, whereby several of its parts, are not yet really scientifically understood in anatomical, physiological, or biological

terms. Human body acquires natural capacity to resist sickness or illness to a certain limit, if it is properly promoted, protected and maintained through various interventions in health promotion activities according to the available knowledge and know how, such as in areas of food and nutrition, physical and mental exercise, health – friendly environment in both physical and psychosocial terms. Very importantly, human being must not do or inflict anything harmful to his or her body, such as tobacco smoking, drinking alcohol, abuse of drugs, adopting unhealthy lifestyles, and exposing oneself to the environment that is full of disease risks. All these are harmful to human body, human health, which are decreasing its capacity to resist sickness or illness.

When falling sick or ill one should firstly consider how he or she may be able to take a proper care of his or her own self. In many cases, getting help from others is necessary, one must ask the question like what type of help needed, who to be resorted to for help, and where or how to go for such help. This is in orders to ensure that the best care and treatment will be provided in the most efficient and effective manner by those helping persons. One should not seek medical help too much, too often or unnecessarily beyond the actual need that there may be individually perceived, and not to take drugs, or medicine, especially antibiotics, without a good reason or without a proper medical indication or advice. For this issue, doctor and nurse can be of great help in providing proper advice and guidance or even rendering direct care and treatment. People's decision to seek medical help is indeed very much important. Advice from doctors nurses and other medical personnel is absolutely indispensable; they are the key to advise on the most appropriate decision and action of people when they are getting sick or ill.

Effective self care of people in the population, individually or collectively is the most important factor for good health of all people in community or for healthy population. Good health for all people is entirely dependent on people themselves individually and collectively, so that they are able to pursue the most efficient self - care, family care, and community care through the maximum support of government, health personnel and also other people of all walks of life. This aspect of health development through people themselves should be firmly built in the national health care policy, system, and programs [1-5].

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